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LOTUS AND JEWEL.



LOTUS AND JEWEL

CONTAINING

“*IN AN INDIAN TEMPLE*”

“*A CASKET OF GEMS*”

“*A QUEEN'S REVENGE*”

With other Poems

BY

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ETC. ETC. ETC. ETC.

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IN AN INDIAN TEMPLE.

IN AN INDIAN TEMPLE.



IT was a Temple, white and fair,
Piercing the warm blue Indian air
With painted cupola ; and set
High on a hill-side, where there met
Two streams—with sister-kiss of wave—
Which rippled lightly down, to lave
Our Deccan flats, gliding to grow
Beema—and Kistna next—and flow
By many a peopled plain and lea
Into the Coromandel sea.
And all along those shining banks
Neem and acacia trees in ranks
Shaded the flood, making cool homes
Of leafy peace for all that comes
To river-side, the pheasant-crow,
The jay, the coppersmith whose blow—

In his green smithy stoutly plied
Ringing from dawn till eventide—
Falls ‘klink, klank, klink,’ upon the ear ;
And social weavers who, from fear
Of thievish snakes, their nests suspend
Swinging from every branchlet’s end :
There, too, the nine brown sisters talked ;
The silver-feathered egret stalked ;
The *muchi-baug*—“tiger of fish”—
Shot from the air with arrowy swish
And soared again—his pearly prey
Clutched in red talons. All the day
You heard the necklaced jungle-dove
Cooing low songs of ceaseless love ;
While, brooding near, his listening wife
With soft breast warmed her eggs to life ;
And, from the hot vault of the sky
The circling kite made fierce reply ;
For Love and Hate were neighbours still
Even upon that holy hill !

Yet, in the Temple all seemed peace.
There—sitting upon Shiva’s knees—

Parvati, shaped in gold, was seen,—
 With great eyes jewelled—Shiva's Queen :
 And nigh them, in the inmost dusk,
 Ganpati, known by broken tusk
 And trunk of elephant. No sound
 Stirred the deep quiet of that ground
 Where the Gods dwelled, save footfall rare
 Of Hindoo wife or maid, with fare
 Of coloured rice or honeyed cake
 For Shiva's Priest, and vows to make
 Before the shrine in some dear name ;
 Save, also, when the pigeons came,
 A blue cloud, whirring from the wood
 To peck their daily Temple-food.
 If other echo silence broke
 'Twas Govind murmuring Sanskrit shloke
 From ancient scrolls, or chanting prayers
 Three times a day, Govind who bears—
 Immeasurably wise—the weight
 Of threescore learnèd years and eight,
 Shiva's calm servant. Sometimes, you
 Would hear within that Temple, too,
 Gunga the Nautch-girl's anklets chime
 Dancing in some grave measured rhyme

Before the Gods, to throb of drum
And low-played pipe, or, with deft thumb
Twangling the tight-stretched vina-string
To yield shrill notes, while she did sing
Of Love—as Nautchnees know—and praise
Of lovers dead for Love; and lays
Of wounded hearts and piercing eyes;
Which grey Philosophies despise.

Good friends were dancing girl and priest
To one I knew, such friends—at least—
As those may be whom Fortune gives
Stars wide apart and differing lives:
And Gunga to the Saheb would sing
Sweet Indian songs for pleasuring;
And Govind—patient with their folly—
Would listen, mild and melancholy,
Till nobler moments rose, and then
Speak wisely on the ways of men,
The worlds of Gods, the wisdom hid
In Upanishad, Pooran, Ved:
Nay, and sometimes, with careful finger,
On some dark text and comment linger,
Sifting its sacred meanings o'er—

As when in burning Ratnapoor
The ruby-miners wash away
Gravel and dust and yellow clay
To leave at last one jewel bare,
'Pigeon-blood' colour, faultless, rare!
Which to the finder freedom brings,
And glows, in seal or crown of kings.

On such a day those sate together
Under the sky of splendent weather
Which shines in Poush, and held debate—
Friendly or petulant—with weight
Of Govind's lore at one time heard,
And then—like some loud 'tit-wee' bird—
The Nautch-girl mocking all save Love;
Anon, demure as any dove,
Listening to wisdom; and, again,
Falling with laughter to some strain
Ill-fitted to the theme:

But sit
In Temple-shade, and judge of it!

Saheb. Pandit ! You promised me to read to-day
That Upanîshad where the Sanskrit tells
The inner meanings of your mystic Word,
The Word we must not utter till we meet
Privately here, with foolish ears away.

Priest. Yea ! the Mandûkya ! hast thou conned the
text ?

S. It was so hard and rugged none might read
As little taught as I. The words were plain,
But not the sense. 'Twas like a rain-time cloud
Blown by the wind, sending far thunder forth,
Which seemed to bring some message if man's ear
Had wit to comprehend.

P. It hath such wit
If it will listen well ; and thou may'st learn
More than thy Sages know beyond the seas,
Pondering Mandûkya ; for the leaves recite
What lies within that Word we must not speak
Where Mlechchas are.

S. Well ! will you say it now ?

P. I sin—the Book being so majestic,
And thou no twice-born—if I teach thee this ;
Save that thou lovest our Land, and lov'st to tread
All paths of knowledge. But is Gunga there ?

S. I saw her scattering pulse to feed the doves
 When I rode in, and—hark! her vina plays!
 You will not stay our study for the girl?

[Gunga enters, holding a Vina. She salutes the Priest and
 the Englishman.]

Gunga. Swasti! my holy Rishi! Maharaj,
 Salaam! Bid me not go—Mahadev's girl—
 Who dances for the pleasure of the Gods,
 And brings the temple treasure. See, rupees!
 I got them singing yesternight: mine eyes
 Pierced the Rao Saheb to the heart, which bled
 Plentiful gifts; yet had he nought from me
 Save one kiss on the brow. Ah, *Mera Jan!*
 My English Lord; I know a song on that:

[*She plays and sings*]

“*My Lotus-eyed—my Love that loves me now—
 She lets me touch the tilka on her brow,
 And mouth as soft as are the bimba-leaves,
 And little rounded chin, whence love perceives
 The smooth brown neck sink to that tender place
 Where the heart beats between two hills of grace.*”

“ *But, when I would have kissed the rose-red peaks
Of those dear mountains,—as a pilgrim seeks
To worship on the highest spot—she cried :
‘ Nay, nay ! my eholi must not be untied !’
So trips she off, as from the tamarind-spray
A light hen-koil, in her mate’s mid lay.”*

S. Oh, Gunga ! if you vex the Pandit’s soul
He will not read, and I shall miss to know
What says Mandûkya. Sit and learn this lore,—
If you may hear it.

P. Nay, the girl can hear !
I am too old for anger, and she bears
A gentle breast, and serves our Temple well,
Though all too light of mind, and loose of tongue.

G. Dear Master ! make me wise ! Gunga is good
When you will teach ; and what should Sahebs know
A Nautchnee must not hear ? The gates are shut ;
The Temple-birds are fed ; sometimes I think—
When only they and I are in the Court,
And I sit watching how they pace about,
With red feet like to mine, all henna-stained,
And barred backs, like my striped and painted cloth ;
And jewels round their throats, like these I wear !

Reach me the lota, girl! that I may wash
 My mouth from stain: then, covering one hand,
 I raise this other to my lips, and say,
 With three half-breaths drawn in,—but slow and low—
 The three great *matras* of this mighty Word
 Which is as Silence spoken! Hear'st thou?—OM!—

S. How are there three?

P. 'Tis made of A,—U,—M:
 And last the *vindu* binding all in one,
 Which one is holiest of all uttered speech,
 Sweet to the Gods, consummate, good to say
 At all the Samdhyas,—when Night joineth Morn,
 Morning the Afternoon, and Evening Night;
 Good to repeat before we read the Veds,
 And when we finish; locking all truths up
 As the womb holds the life, as rocks hide gems,
 And seeds the leaf, flower, fruit. A Scripture saith
 “OM is the bow; the Arrow is the Soul;
 Brahm is the object: he who shooteth straight
 Pierceth the target of the Uttermost,
 Attaineth end.” “Meditate OM!” it saith:
 “For, in that mystic light, the knowers know
 Brahm without body, parts, or passions—Brahm
 Joyful, Eternal, All-embracing, Pure.”

This Word hath all words in it, all three names
 Of Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu ; all three worlds—
 Earths, Ethers, Heavens ; and all three modes of Time
 Past, Present, Future ; all three sexes, too,
 Yoni, and Lingam, and what yoketh both ;
 And all three Veds !

See ! on yon banyan-branch
 Which overhangs our wall, two parroquets !
 There is a Scripture—third of *Mundaka*—
 Telleth of that, so as a man may read
 Who knoweth OM. Two Birds—it sayeth—sit,
 Always united, always equal-plumed,
 Perched on one fig-tree branch. This pecks the fruit
 That feedeth not, but gazeth—witnessing ;—
 And She who eateth is the Human Soul,
 And he who watcheth is the Soul Divine,
 And Life the Fig-tree is, and Life's delights
 Its too sweet fruit. But, if one knoweth OM,
 The feeding bird looks on the watching bird—
 Its mate immortal, scorning those false fruits—
 And leaveth all, to join the "All of All ;"
 Saved by right sight, lifted on wiser wings
 To better pleasures ;—as, see ! now they fly—
 Those green birds,—high into the stainless Blue !

Oh, look you, Friend! when the great Gods would hear
 What Brahm was, unto Indra came they all
 Asking this thing, glorious as yonder clouds
 Which flock towards the throne of the sinking Sun,
 Ruby and amethyst, and pearl and gold;
 And Indra bade them sit beneath a tree—
 The Nyagrodha tree—nor spake he once,
 Through twenty thousand moons, to that bright throng
 Of seated Gods; but at the last he spake
 Saying, with fingers on his hushed lips, “OM!”
 Then all the Gods went to their places wise.

S. And you are wise, good Pandit! Yet I long
 To hear this scroll, and Gunga burns to hear;
 She did not glean such treasure from the hand
 Of yon Rao Saheb!

[*To the Nautch Girl.*]

Slack your vina-strings,
 And sit in closer! You've no song for that:

G. How know you, Maharaj? There's drum and
 dance
 For all the moods;—Mahadev's girl can sing
 Many like this:

[*She sings and plays*]

“ *Because I have not served Thee right, oh, sweet and mighty
Lord !
Thou wilt not less deliverance, and rest with Thee afford ;
Who drinks of blessèd Amrit,—though it be with dying
lips,—
Lives, and grows well and pure again, at the first drop he
sips.*”

But let my music sleep !

Now will I listen !

P. I shall read the text

In brief lines—as it runs—then make all plain.

“ *Nama Paramâtmane Huri ! OM !*

OM ! Amityétad Aksharam idan

Sarvvan tasyoparyâkhyânan bhât !”—

Which meaneth, “ *Glory in the Highest ! OM !*

The Immeasurable ! This is immortal ! OM !

This is the One ! This word, interpreted,

Is what was in beginning, and is now,

And ever shall be—OM embraceth those—

The threefold modes of Life, and what's beyond

Unneted by them. OM is that, and all !”

“*Sarvvan hyêtadbrahmâyamatma*”—OM,
 So spoken of the All, is Brahm : the soul
 Is Brahm : yet here this soul goes *chatuspât*
 “Four-footed ;” owns conditions four. Observe
 How these be packed in OM !

S. Now, Gunga, list !
 Why do you smile ?

G. I wonder why I sang
 These wistful words, of late, to one I loved :

[*She sings and plays*]

“*What should I say at hour of parting hateful ?
 If I sigh ‘leave me not !’ that seems ungrateful !
 If I should whisper ‘go’ it sounds so coldly ;
 And to cry ‘stay’ were to command too boldly ;
 ‘Go, if thou wilt,—stay, if thou wilt !’—this savours
 Of heedless heart ; while full of Fate’s ill-favours
 ’Twould be to murmur, ‘If we part, I die !’
 Lest that fall true : alas ! I know not—I—
 What thing to utter ! Teach me some wise word
 To say when you must leave me, Dearest Lord !”*

Now, had I known—“Om” was the word to speak,
 Which all thoughts compasses.

S. You feather, blown
From pea-hen's neck at pairing-time, be still!
Now, Pandit! tell us these conditions four.

P. *Prathamah pādah*, Sir! *Vaiśvânara*.
"The first condition is 'Vaiśvânara.'"
Now, this word signifieth 'Consciousness,'
Common to all men (*vaiśva-nar*), and so
Intendeth common waking life, that state
Wherein we eat and drink, and see and smell,
And hear and touch and taste. The holy script
Sayeth, 'Vaiśvânara is waking life;
Whereof the knowledge is of outward things
Cheating the sense. Seven organs hath this life,
And mouths nineteen. It feedeth on the Gross.'

G. Oh, Shiva! Nineteen mouths! How one might
kiss!

S. Which are the organs seven; and which those
mouths
Twenty less one?

P. The books speak diversely;
Yet our chief sages teach the organs seven
Of waking life, are—for the Head the Heavens,
For Eye the Sun, for Breath the moving Wind,
For Heart the Ether, for the Humours, Sea,

For Feet the Earth, for Heat the inner Fires.
 Also those nineteen mouths are nineteen doors
 Whereby the world hath access to the Self ;
 And these be—the five modes of Intellect,
 The five Sense-gateways, the five Vital airs ;
 With Mind, Will, Individual Consciousness,
 And *Chittam*, which is sense behind the sense,
 That whereby sight of eye, and touch of skin,
 And taste, and smell, and sound are cognited.
 Such is Vaiśvânara—the waking Life—
 The letter A denoteth it in AUM.

S. And what is U ?

P. It standeth in the Word
 For *Taijasa*, second of living states,
 Which hath its name from *tejas*—“brilliancy,”
 Being that gleam which thou shalt see with eyes
 Fast shut, when all the gloom danceth in sparks,
 And, on the inner lids the lingering light
 Paints stars and rings of spangled phantasy ;
 For *Taijasa* is slumber, when we dream,
 And the scroll saith : it hath the organs seven,
 The gates nineteen, but knoweth inner things,
 And—*praviviktabhuk*—in sightless sleep
 It “feedeth on the Subtle.”

G. Ah! I know
 Your Taijasa! when I have danced all night,
 And draw my cloth, at last, across my eyes,
 I see the Temple-lamps pale and more pale
 Inside my lids, all down the road to sleep;
 Till at the end there comes a softer light
 Which needs no eyes; and there I lie, and dream!

S. What dream you of, my Gungabae?

G. Of gold
 So much it bursts my cloth! of beauteous gems
 Hung on my neck by some one loving me;
 Or 'tis a Prince who sends me cardamums
 Which mean "your breath is Heaven!" or sandal-wood
 Chipped small, which is to say, "In seeing you
 I become water!" or stick-cinnamon
 Which signifies "my life is thine!" Sometimes
 I dream the gods rise from their seats, and wink
 Their jewelled eyes, and tell me where to find
 Blue lotus for their shrines, or where there lies
 A buried pot of mohurs; sometimes, too,
 I see two elephants that fight and fight
 Without their mahoots—that means death! or see
 Lotusess grown in sand, and that means love
 From unexpected places; or I spy

Holes in the moon and serpents with ten mouths,
 And those, I know, bring ill ! But it is good
 To dream of fire-flies, mirrors, thrones, and fish,
 And rice, and rainbows : yestereve I dreamed
 A black calf sucked a brindled heifer's bag,
 And that, be sure, shows losses ; so I brought
 A jar of milk to-day for Parvati.

P. Yea, Nautchni, yea ! that is the waking light
 Glimmering in visions ; that is *Taijasa* !
 Yet so—if thou wert wiser—shouldst thou see
 Innermost things, ev'n dreaming ; nay, and so
 Thou, too, dost pass into a deeper sleep,
 Life's third Condition.

S. And the name of this ?—

P. The name, Sahebji ! is *Prajna*, letter M
 Of those three letters of the mighty Word.
 Here, very plain our ancient writing runs !
Yatra supno na kanchan kamayaté
Kaman, na kanchan svupnan pasyati—
 “ When he asleep desireth no desire,
 Dreameth no dreams, that is the perfect sleep—
Sushupnan—that is *Prajna* ; then he lives ! ”
 “ He, lying thus,” it saith, “ lieth, grown one
 With all which is ; that which he knows he knows

By knowledge unified; his peace is peace
 Perfect, except for ceasing; bliss he tastes
 As taste the Gods, and—*chêtomukh*—his mouth
 Is Wisdom's portal. He is Lord of all,
 All-sharing, ruling inner things, a soul
 Whence springeth life as from a Yoni—so
 He maketh and unmaketh." Such is M,
 The third great *matra*.

S. Yet resolve me this,
 How 'maketh and unmaketh?' what is life
 Its senses chained in sleep?

P. Suffer me, Sir!
 To answer from *Brihadâranyaka*
 Where Raja Janaka holds deep discourse
 With Yajnavalkya, and the good Prince asked,
 "By what light lives the Soul?" The Brahman said:
 It liveth here by sunlight, using eyes;
 And lacking sunlight, by the gleam of the moon;
 And, if there be no moon, or sun, by fire;
 And if the fire fails, then by sound or touch;
 But if no sound is heard, and all be void,
 Then is the Soul sufficing light to Soul.
 For dwelling in the hollow of the heart,
 Girt by the senses as a king by slaves,

Being left alone it riseth, lights its lamp,
And, wandering down the borders of two worlds,
Seemeth to think, yet watcheth what is thought ;
Seemeth to move, but stays unchangeable.
Then fall away from Soul the ills it took
Assuming form ; like Handmaids, Sleep and Night
Strip it of those ; it goes majestic,
And sees two lives, on this and that side ; one
Here of this Earth, and in another World
Another not yet known, between which winds—
With banks and shoals that shift, now nearer Life,
Now nearer Death—the placid channel of Sleep,
Like a black, shadowy, hidden, windless stream
Whose silent waters lave both lands, and bear
The Spirit on its tranquil boat of flesh
Hither and thither. Gliding wistfully
Down that dividing flood the Soul, secure,
Seeth both shores, and bringeth what it will
From that to this, and taketh what it will,
And “maketh and unmaketh.” Horses, roads,
Or chariots are there none in Shadow-Land,
Yet the Soul willeth these, and see ! it drives,
Horsed, glorious, eager, through the boundless Murk !
No bliss, no kiss, no large delights be there

Of beautiful kind faces lit with love ;
 Of soft arms shutting into Paradise ;
 Yet the Soul wills there be, and lo ! that Dark
 Is filled with companies of Apsarâs,
 Lovely and sweet all mortal maids beyond—
 Sweeter than Rambha whom Râvana wooed !
 There are no tanks, no palaces, no trees,
 Nor feasts, nor dances ; but the Soul doth will,
 And, see ! the Dark grows gracious with great walls
 Built on the void, ramps of red gold, and domes
 Of cloud-poised marble, and fair cloistered courts
 Where wave the feathers of the palms, and flit
 Swift glistening shoals of fish in liliated pools ;
 And dancers, rosy-footed, and bright-eyed,
 Melt the glad soul to love.

Subduing flesh

By spell of sleep he—not himself asleep—
 Sees his sense slumbering, and moves away
 Free as the mated bird launching from branch.
 The Life-breath keeps the nest—the Soul flies off,
 To go and come in that wide Realm of Rest
 Making its manifold shapes, unmaking them ;
 Rejoicing in the arms of Dream-maidens ;
 Laughing with lovely friends, moving at will

On wondrous wings of thought ; arriving swift
 At splendid sights, or strange, or tragical,
 And sometimes terrible—for fear is dear
 As well as joy ! Yet, though thou know'st that Land,
 Thou shalt not meet the Soul there, nay—nor mark
 Where in the viewless vast it wandereth.
 Therefore, let no man wake one suddenly,
 Lest Soul return not well from its long way !

And Yājñavalkya said : The Soul,—thus roaming,
 Thus, like a falcon, flying here and there
 From cliff to cliff of sleep's far boundaries,
 Seeing the glad and sad, the old and new,
 The good and ill,—presently wearieth.
 Then doth it fold its pinions and sink down
 Into Soul's nest, reaching the dreamless Peace
Prajna. There follow not to that deep state,
 Gladness or sadness, good or evil. Life
 Is lifted out of living—Soul grows Brahm !
 Nor let one say 'it seeth—heareth not !'
 That which doth see and hear is Self ;—eye, ear
 Were instruments, laid down : who used them keeps
 Light of his own, sound of his own, touch, taste
 Other than ours !

Such is the letter M,
Third *matra* of the Holy Word.

S. I ask,
Right-learnëd Friend! why Good and Evil cease
Because Soul sleeps?

P. Surely such names subsist
In worlds of 'thine and mine,' of 'this and that,'
Of 'praise and blame!' Where all things melt in
one
Evil and Good are fled, to plague no more.

S. Well! who may judge? In England—over-sea,
Our Gunga here, that is so kind and gay;
Who loves the Gods, and gives to all the poor,
And would not hurt a grey gnat, if it stung;
And built the Dharma-Sāla (Nay! you did!),
And knows all dances, and a hundred songs;
And holds her trade as honest as the best:—
With us she would rank viler than with you
Yon Mhar, that must not touch a Brahman's cloth.

G. By Shiva's snakes! Out there are all so pure?

S. Not all! Yet we have built the House of Love
With Christian stones, and each man chooses love
Not by some other's will—as here with you—
But for himself; and each will have his love—

If such may be—white as the Champak-bud
When first its green cup splits.

G. And fares it well

With those cold blossoms, in the homes they find ?

S. Yes, Gunga ! nobly well in honest homes !

For lovely is the flower of chastity,
Lasting its fragrance, and its fruit more fair
Than chance fruits borne on boughs whence all may pluck.

And goodly is the air of Liberty
For all, but most for lovers, seeing Love
Knows more than Wisdom, and because young hearts
Choose better than their elders, being taught
By Nature, 'ware of inmost sympathy,
And subtle suitings of this blood and that
To blend together for fresh human veins.

So life's long road goes happier for the grace
Of good beginnings ! You and I may praise
The white flower on the rock we cannot reach !
Oh, and full well I know what happy hearths
Are here in India, and what stainless wives
Live their sweet lives and die their gentle deaths
Under your suns.

G. My mother vowed me this —

A Deva-Dasa, servant to the God—

To save my father's life, when she did go
 Great with me. And my father rose, made whole
 After that vow ; and, then, they married me—
 New-born—with garlands and the mangal-shloke
 Wife to the “ Dagger ;” and they laid red rice
 Upon my head, and taught me how to dance,
 Play vina, plait my hair with flowers, and make
 Great eyes for money. Must I be ashamed ?

S. Not before me, my Sister ! It were well
 Certain most faultless ones were half as good,
 As gentle-souled !

But, Govind ! at the last
 Is not Good good, and Evil evil ? Brahm—
 If He be All in All—must deal as Lord
 With all three states of OM. Note, too, that verse
 Of *Katha Upanishad*, “ What is here
 Visible in our world, is also there
 In Brahm's invisible world ; and what is there
 That same is here unseen.”

P.

It is so writ !

S. Then, by good leave, your Indian systems lack
 Two points we Westerns boast—the love of man
 For God's love, Who hath made him ; and this Law—
 That because Right is right we follow Right.

P. Give me example, Sir! that I may judge.

S. Well! I remember one! But tell me first
Is it good Hindoo rule a wife should live
Faithful to death unto her husband's bed?

P. Yea, by a hundred Shasters!

S. Yet again,
Is it good Hindoo rule if one who starves
Craves food, the householder shall surely give?

P. Yea! and our Scriptures say: "If one shall bar
The door against an asker, when he goes
Hungry away, he leaves his own sins there,
And takes the good deeds of the householder."

S. But which of these two duties is the first?

P. Neither is first or last. Both must be kept!

S. Then judge hereof. There dwelt a householder
In Gaya, where the twin streams wander down—
Nilâjan and Mohâna. Just and mild
This Brahman was, dutiful unto all,
In life's bright prime, a goodly man to view,
Whom fairest wives might worship. So, indeed,
Sita loved Balaram. No new-wed bride
Ever more gladsome paced the seven steps,
Shared the dyed rice, or wore the golden cloth,
And iron bangle: nor, in all that land

Shone sweeter face bearing the marriage-mark
 Stamped with vermilion. These two loved—I say—
 Like Krishna and like Radha. Oh, you know!
 At coming home, when the white stars peep forth,
 And all your Indian sky turns purple peace,
 'Twas “*Sonarchund!* My moon of gold! art safe?
 I lived with half my life, whilst thou wert gone!
 Ah, didst thou think on me all day?” And he,
 “My Pomegranate! my Pearl! whose arms are Heaven,
 And mouth as sweet as new Keôra-buds,
 How could I think of you, my heart being here?”

G. Why, that's a song we sing! The air goes so:

[*She sings and plays*]

“*Think on me, Dear! you said, at parting;
 But this I did not do;
 Without my heart I could not think,
 And it remained with you.*”

S. Well! thus they loved. But then the Famine fell:
 Indra was angry, and his brazen skies
 Cooled with no cloud, and let no sweet rain fall.
 In wood and nullah forest creatures died
 Pining for drink: the shyest beasts drew in

To lap at village wells ; the thirsting snake
 Crept to the mud-hole, where the snake-bird drooped
 Too parched to strike ! The green crops died to grey,
 And famished people fed on jungle-meats—
 Berries and roots—for half a seer of rice
 Sold at two annas, and jowâree went
 Thirty rupees the candy ! Balaram
 Nourished his quarter while the bags held grain,
 Then fell to lack and leanness, with the rest ;
 To sorer lack, because, when there was food
 Upon his household fire, the good man lied
 A loving lie, saying : “ I ate to-day
 With Kerupunt—or Lakhsman ! ”—so that she
 Might take her fill, and keep her beauty bright.

Was one, inside the city, loved this wife
 Unhonestly—Vittoo the wealthy Sett,
 Who sold the starving towns-folk pulse, yet kept
 His grain-pits filled, hoarding the precious store.
 And many a time—when Sita came to buy—
 The man would say, measuring less niggard seers,
 “ Oh, Rose of our sad garden ! rice is dear ;
 Hardly, except to thee, have I to sell !
 By Shiva ! but I cheapen this for thee !

Yet wouldst thou once—once only—of fair grace—
 Be kind to him who worships where he sees
 The foot-mark of thy feet ; once, only once !—
 Lest Death come 'ere my soul's desire be had ;—
 Then would I load thy cloth with bhat and dall,
 Asking no price.” And she would answer, proud,
 “ I hate thee, Vittoo, for thy wicked love ;
 My Lord will kill thee if I speak of this,
 Or sit and starve rather than buy from thee.
 Give me my grain, and let me go ! ” Whereat
 The Sett's heart burned in secret, and his gains
 Joyed him no more ; for, always, day and night
 The face of Sita drew him like a spell.

P. Ah, that a mortal man will sin so deep !

S. Now—one day—at the worst ; when Balaram
 Was gone a-seeking bambu-seed to eat ;
 And Sita's self had tasted nought from dawn,
 The last rice being cooked, the last gem sold,
 The last poor cowrie spent, there came a Sage
 Asking this wife for food. Reverend he seemed,
 Of pious mien and speech—a Rishi, sure !
 Wearing the saffron-coloured garb, and marked
 With Shiva's lines upon his wrinkled brow.
 “ Give me to eat, Fair Daughter ! for I die

To-day, at sunset, if I touch no meal!"
 So craved he, with low voice, blessing the house,
 And therewith sank within the threshold-stone,
 Piteous to note, so holy and so wan;
 This hope his last! Then sprang the bitter tears
 To Sita's gentle eyes; faltered her lips;
 Beat her true heart as though to burst.—Dear Heaven!
 What shall she say? If she shall say, "This house
 Is emptied, Father! not one bajri-ear
 Is left thy servants!"—then the grief, the shame,
 To see him creep away, whom Shastras bid
 Succour and honour! And, if she shall say,
 "My Lord is absent, he will bring us food!"
 Who knows? who knows? Balaram may not find
 Till nightfall, or may come bringing no meal;
 And ere that hour the Rishi will lie dead!
 But oh! if now—to save this life—she say,
 "I have no grain, yet, Maharaj! I know
 The means to win some;" (Gunga! had you felt
 Her veins throb while she thought it!) would he not
 Enquire the means, and, learning, choose to die
 Rather than she should stain her soul, and truck
 Heart's love and household joys and blameless name
 For half a maund of rice! She must not tell!

He shall not die! Ah, Balaram, forgive!
 Ah, High Gods! help her find the rightful path!
 She led that holy man tenderly in,
 And, sweetly smiling, wiped her tears away,
 And sighed: "Be pleased to rest! thy handmaid goes
 To fetch thee food; presently thou shalt eat!"

G. Now, stay not, Saheb! This is more than songs!

P. Yes, Nautchni! But, I wonder, did she go?

S. She drew her sari round her head, and stepped
 Into the street. Time was, when Sita passed,
 Neighbours would give her greeting, pleased to hear
 The music of her anklets, glad to catch
 The sunlight of her glance; now went she sad
 No friend regarding; for the ways were void;
 Or, if a foot-fall sounded, 'twas of men
 Haggard and gaunt, who moaned, with lips drawn tight,
 "Hast thou to help us, Sister?" stalking on
 When, for all answer—with her tears in flood—
 She stretched an empty palm. Once and again
 A mother with lean arms held high her babe,
 Saying: "Buy this, sweet Lady! for so much
 As one small pot of rice, before I die!"

And, thrice, in mid-bazaar, she met unveiled
 With faces wild, wearing a ragged cloth,
 Stripped of their gems, and gnawing food unfit,
 Proud purdah women, whom in days gone by
 No stranger's eye had looked on; now they walked
 Hungry and unabashed, their beauty marred,
 Their soft feet stained with mire. No townsman asked,
 "Balaram's wife, where goest thou?" The dead
 Lay silent, and the dying found no voice;
 But unto Sita's throbbing heart it seemed
 As though the sun glared hard, as though the wind
 Went mocking her, blowing her sari back
 To strip the harlot's face. All down the street
 House windows gazed upon her; Peepal-trees—
 Which know the things men do, and tell the Gods—
 Whispered her desperate deed with rustling leaves
 One to another, and the clamorous crows
 Cawed scorn against her.

So with painful steps

Came she to Vittoo's door.

The Sett salaamed:

"Fortunate day!" he cried. "Good day and glad
 Which brings again to us that lotus-face!
 In what thing may thy servant pleasure Thee?"

And Sita—hiding all except her eyes—
Made answer, speaking slow and shamedly,
“There is come one who must not be denied
Unto our house ; he craveth food :—will die
If none be given ; and we have none to give.
Thou hast desired me : measure now for me
Six seers of rice, and tie it in my cloth
Asking no money, for our last is spent :—
And this night, when the houses are all shut
I will come hither,—as thou prayedst me.”

No word he spake, but with a trembling mouth
Kissed her feet, bending down ; then filled her cloth,
Not measuring the grain. So Sita came
Back to her home, and set the chatty on,
And—boiling rice—served to that holy man ;
Who ate with brightening eyes, and took farewell ;
First raising to his grateful lips the hem
Of Sita’s garment : “ Be it well with thee,
Fair Daughter ! ” said he, “ for thy charity,
Here and hereafter ! ”

Entered Balaram

Presently—bringing jungle-roots ; but laid
His bitter food aside, smelling the rice.

“Oh, gem of women!” cried he, “whence is this?
How hast thou conjee, when I could not find
One friend in all the town, with half a seer?”

“Dear Lord!” Sita replied, “judge me herein
Ere thou dost eat! There came a holy man,
Of pious mien and speech—a Rishi, sure—
Reverend to see, wearing the saffron robe,
Who craved for food, and moaned, ‘Give, or I die!’”
All this she told—and how she cast about
Not having food, nor daring to endure
Her Lord’s hearth should be shamed by churlish deed—
“For thou, I know,” said she, “had given thy blood
To help a Rishi!”—how—her Lord being gone—
Means must be found. Then piteous she went on:
“Thou did’st not think—I could not tell—forgive!
Vittoo the Sett these many days hath cast
Vile eyes of longing on me, praying me—
Once, and once only,—lest he die unjoyed—
To grant him that—which is for thee alone.
And I have spit upon him, praying thus.
But now—in such sore need—judge me, dear Lord!
Seeing that holy man at point to die,
Thyself away, and nothing left,—save this,

I fetched six seers from Vittoo—promising
That this night, when the houses are all shut,
I would go there, and give—what he hath asked.”

Silent he stood awhile, with limbs braced hard,
And breath caught back, and blood chilled in his veins,
As when afield th' unwitting antelope
Sees the lithe cheetah spring, and knows it death.
The next fierce instant in his breast his hand
Fumbled the handle of his jungle-knife,
And settled where to strike—there! twixt the breasts!
Straight to that bartered heart! Then, a long sigh
Broke from his soul, and—as she sank, full length,
Sobbing upon his feet—the rage—the hate,
The tempest of his thunderous misery,
His husband's wrath—his man's fond passion—passed
From lips and eyes, as, on a stormy noon
The shadows of the lightning-cloud, which lay
Black on the hill-side, flit; and sunshine gleams.

“Thou hast done well!” he said, with breaking voice,
“And rightly, Sita! though I would the flames
Had fed on me ere this. It was not meet
To let the Guru die——not possible!

And thou hadst no more means ;—and I away.
I thought to kill thee, Dear ! whilst thou didst speak ;
Then thought to slay the Sett ;—but that is past !
Thou hast not sinned, Fair Wife ! seeking to pay
My duty's price, and finding nought to give
Save thy sweet self. 'Tis hard we lived for this
Who will be dead anon ; yet we should keep—
Must keep—our plighted word. Therefore to-night,
'Thou art this man's ! I part thy savoury rice
Into two portions ; one I bid thee eat—
'Thou must not faint before thou payest our debt—
This other I will take to Venkatrao
Whose children famish. Now then, dress thy hair !
No ! not i' the old way ; not that pretty way
When I was wont to plunge my lips in its silk ;
But as they use who do this trade ; and scent
Thy breasts with musk, and paint thy lids, and stain
Thy feet and hands with mehndi."

“ See ! it rains !

When pity comes too late the skies relent :
There will be plenty soon for all, and peace,
Except for me ! Yet, since it is not fit
Thou shouldst go street-stained to the merchant's house,

With mire on thy fair feet—myself will bear
His concubine to Vittoo. Speak not! Dress!”

And, when Night fell, and all the people slept
Lulled by the blessèd rain—sounded a knock
At Vittoo's door—waiting ajar: a voice
Spake softly: “Kholo! open!—I am here!”

So,—lighted by the flickering lamp which burned
At Ganpat's shrine—the Sett beheld her stand—
Beautiful Sita, Sita with dove's eyes,
Sita whom all his soul loved and desired,
Come to be his! Joyous he led the way
To where an inner room shone bright with lights,
And gay with painted walls, and richly set
With luxury of yielding beds and shawls
Woven with silk and silver. “Sit, I pray;
And suffer that I fetch thee foot-water,
My goddess! who hast deigned to pace afoot
Unto her worshipper!” Thus quoth the Sett
Half glad, half fearful of his sighing guest,
So silent, and so mournful, and so fair.
But, when he would have laved those beauteous feet
Look! not a journey-stain! not one small speck
Upon them of bazaar-mud!—and such rain!

“Now art thou surely Goddess!” Vittoo said :
 “And thou hast hither flown on hidden wings,
 Straight down from Swarga : else, how is there rain
 On thy smooth head, but no mire on thy feet?”

Sita gave answer—very sorrowful—
 “My husband bore me hither—knowing all!”

What think ye now that Sett did, hearing this?

P. I cannot tell. He lived to call in debts!

G. We cannot tell! Oh, Saheb of Sahebs, go on!

S. He set the water-pot aside, and bowed
 His forehead to her feet—touching his eyes,
 His brow, his mouth, his breast, with trembling hands ;
 Making the eight prostrations. Then, he rose
 Claspng his palms together, while he paced
 Thrice round her, as ye circle Parvati
 Reverently worshipping ; then meekly spake :
 “I am a sinful man, who dared to grasp
 At beauty all beyond me, as is Heaven ;
 At goodness so above me as the stars
 Are higher than my roof ; yet, dare I not
 Do wrong to him, who did himself this wrong,

Bearing thee hither—out of noblest soul,
 Out of such truth that it makes false men true.
 Lady! go free of me! and pray thy Lord
 That he forgive! Say Vittoo writes thy debt
 ‘Paid’ in his books—with face upon the dust,
 And lips imploring pardon, as from Gods!”

So came she spotless home; and the rain fell
 Through fifteen days; and rice sold cheap again.

Now who did well herein, and who did ill?

G. Oh, Shiva! the sweet tale!—By Chittor’s curse
 I know it is a sin if holy saints
 Ask food and none be given; yet, were I he—
 Rather such sin,—whatever Manu says—
 And Death, and Narak after! than to lose
 Were I that man—the woman I so loved!

P. I know it is a sin—as Manu saith—
 To loose the bond of marriage, and to sell
 Love for a gift; but yet—had I been there—
 Rather than turn away that saint unfed—
 Were I the woman, and his strait so sore—
 I had done even as Sita, unabashed!

S. See now, you stand on either side ! and Right
 Splits midway, on the edge of Manu's rules.
 I think—interpreting a Western mind—
 The wife did evil, helping life to live
 At cost of Love and Fame, dearer than Life :
 The husband evil, paying wrongful debt
 With coin which none should ask, and no man give :
 And most I praise Vittoo the grain-seller,
 Who sinned in heart, yet had such heart to see
 The loveliness of honour—Manu's sort !

P. We must observe a promise ! Azuf Jah
 Marching to war—only a Mussulman !—
 Made compact with our Waghur cattle-men ;
 Wrote it in gold, upon a copper plate,
 And kept its every line ; even now they sing :—

*“ Drink full of my rivers ;
 Graze free in my fields ;
 Strip grass from my roofs
 If no grass the soil yields :
 Three murders a day
 I forgive you :—but, heed
 That your bullocks stand ready
 When Azuf hath need ! ”*

Now give me leave, good Sir ! for I must say
 My sun-down Mantras in the *bhût-khana*.
 I will return ere Gunga finds her tongue ;
 That light mind flutters round your story still !

[*Exit* GOVIND.]

G. Indeed, I mused, when the grey Pandit rose,
 Why I, too, feel—being but a dancing-girl—
 Vittoo was best ! There must be happiness
 In that white world of Virtue, whence you brought
 The tender tale : but let hard thought alone !
 At Gwalior the Nautchnees killed a tree,
 Where Akbar's singer lay, for love of him,
 And of his tree—plucking the leaves away
 To make their voices beautiful—till—look !
 There was no tree ! so may we pluck our lives
 Leafless with thinking. Shall we laugh again
 Till Govind comes ? We did not finish OM,
 And you look weary :—let me sing you this ;—
 A young Bihâri taught the words to me :—

[*Gunga plays and sings*]

*Choti Gwâlîni—A milkmaid sped
 Slender, and bright and brown ;*

*With a chatty of curds on her neat little head,
To sell in Mathura town.*

*“ Rama ! ho, Rama ! who buys of me
Curds as white as the ivory ? ”*

*Jahan dharelé—when—at noon-tide,
She set down the chatty, to rest,
Tahan tamua—up to her side,
In silver and satin dressed,
Rama ! ho Rama ! canters the King ;
“ Sweet little milkmaid, marketing ! ”*

*Agu ! hokh agu !—“ forwards go !
Ride on your road, my Lord !
If you lay hands on my sari so,
The curds will spatter your sword !
Rama ! ho Rama ! the curds will fall
On silver, and satin, and jewels, and all ! ”*

*“ Tôra lékhê—you think it is curd
That falls from your milk-pot, Dear !
Môra lékhê—I call it absurd
A goddess such stuff should bear :
Rama ! ho Rama ! ’tis amrit instead
Which Heaven rains down on your beautiful head ! ”*

S. Thanks, Gunga! Koils fluting love in Spring
Pipe nothing softer! but our Sage returns.

[GOVIND *re-enters.*

Now, Sir! we know that A, and U, and M,
In this great Word, are three-fold states of life,
Vaiśvânara the first—the waking state;
Next Taijasa, which is the sleep with dreams;
And thirdly Prajna, where man slumbers deep
Seeing no dreams, but floating, quit of flesh,
On that still border-flood whose waters lave
Life on one bank, and on the other Death.
Now would we hear, *ap ki mihrbâni se—*
Of your kind favour—how the three combine.

P. I read on from Mandûkya:—The Fourth
Is that which holdeth all the three; being Life
Past living, sleeping, dreaming, dying—OM!
He who is there is Brahman, knowing all—
Not as we know, peeping inside and out—
Not as we understand. ‘Wise’ or ‘unwise’
Are words without a meaning for the Soul
Lifted so high! It seeth, all unseen;
Perceiveth unperceived; not understood,
It comprehendeth; never to be named,

Never made palpable ; not limited ;
 The testimony of it being Itself,
 Itself made one with the ONE SOUL, wherein
 Those states are each transcended and absorbed,
 Changeless, rejoicing, passionless, pervading !

And this Eternal Soul of Life, the Self,
 Is named in naming OM ; and OM is named
 From those three *matras*, A and U and M.
 A is Vaiśvânara, the Waking-State ;
 And U is Taijasa, the State of Dreams ;
 And M is Prajna, sleep deeper than dream,
 Where the soul wakes, and moves in larger light,
 Knowing a farther knowledge ; growing one
 With HIM WHO IS !

OM indivisible,
 Embracing those divisions,—hereby grasped—
 Is Soul, the Life of Life, the All, the True,
 Changeless, rejoicing, passionless.

Say OM
 Solemnly, with stilled lips, and mouth made clean !

He with his Soul entereth the Soul of Souls
 Who hath perceived these things—who hath perceived !

S. Pandit! I humbly thank you for my part
 In this most ancient lore, and mystical!
 I make *namaskar* with a grateful heart;
 Keep me in yours! Peace go with you! My horse
 Waits near the gate, bid them lead Wurdah round.

[*Exit* GOVIND.]

And, Gunga! till he comes, wind up your strings
 And sing some last things now of love and tears.
 For if those Scripts are right our lives are wrong;
 Yours *Chand ki tookri!* yours, my 'Beam of the Moon,'
 And mine, who toil to teach so foolishly,
 Being untaught. Yet what a goodly earth
 To seem all nought! What skies of vaulted gold
 Vainly to roof the lives so mocked and scorned!
 What furniture of beauty and delight
 Embellishes this world we are to hate
 At high command of old Philosophies!
Samajhta? Sister!—did you understand?
 These pearls which you do sweetly take of me,
 And the small hands that clutch them, and the eyes
 Which shine so bright, counting the pretty beads,
 Are false as fancy—void—things that be not!
 Yet, how much surer than the surest joy
 Of *Taijasa*, or *Prajna*, seem your lips,

Your black braids, plaited with the jasmine buds,
 Your quick brown fingers toying on the strings;
 And what neat feet to be illusions! Play!
 Find something sad but sweet; for Life is false,
 And Love is false, and only shadows live!
 And we must—little Gunga!—melt to Gods,
 Who were so well-content, women and men;
 Must part, and pass, and dream: I know not—OM!

G. Jo hukm, Maharaj! thy slave obeys:

[*Gunga sings and plays*]

*“Nay! if thou must depart, thou shalt depart;
 But why so soon—oh, Heart-blood of my heart?
 Go then! yet—going—turn and stay thy feet,
 That I may once more see that face so sweet:
 Once more—if never more; for swift days go
 As hastening waters from their fountains flow;
 And whether yet again shall meeting be
 Who knows? who knows? Ah! once more turn to me!”*

*S. Who knows,—who knows? Life a vain breeze
 that blows!*

[*Gunga sings again*]

G. "Blow, gentle Breeze! from my Beloved's place;
And let the airs touch mine, which touched her face:
For this is much to the fond lover—this
Is food to live on—one wind-wafted kiss!"

S. Oh, Bulbul of the hill, sing one verse more
And then—Salaam!

G. And then Salaam! my Lord!

[*She lays aside her Vina, and sighing, sings*]

"Not seeing you, I pine to see! and, when I see, to know
That you will go away again fills me with fear and woe;
No joy of love I find in love, if you be near or far;
Longing to have you by me, and dreading when you are!
Life is not life, if we must live thinking of love's last day;
Oh, never come, my Love and Life! or never go away!"

A CASKET OF GEMS.

[*Partly written in 1870.*]

A CASKET OF GEMS.



DEIGN, Sweetheart ! deign to take what true love
sends,

Its daily gift set fair in gentle song ;
Where—if verse fail—heart's faith would make
amends,

So earnest, speech, at best, must do it wrong.

All lonely as I sit, a fancy raised

Lightens the heavy hour's dull incompleteness :—
Why is she sweet and good save to be praised,
Or I a singer save to praise her sweetness ?

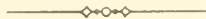
Some whisper from the Silence ! Who can say ?

Poets, before, have found new music so !
At least, hereby, what I thought, day by day,
Your eyes will read, and tender breast will know.

And all spheres, Dear ! are servants unto Love ;
And all things in the World obey a Poet ;
And once—they say—the letter Yod did move,
And cried aloud to Heav'n—Mishna doth show it

Therefore I bid these Letters—each of them—
Be messengers of splendour to you now ;
Each minion casting at your feet some gem
Worthy your white neck, or your arm, or brow

If one should falter—if one fail herein—
Denounce the traitor ! It shall surely bring
Ill to that slave, as when an Arab Djin
Vexed Suleiman, or mocked Aladdin's ring !



F

FIRE-OPALS, Fanny, from the magic cell!

First of my alchemy, but not its best—
Let me lay these upon your hands, and tell
Why they seem not unworthy there to rest.

For since God chained, in nether rock and bluff,
Those radiant, sinful Angels, rebel found,
Were ever—in the midst of dead dull stuff—
Such burning, flashing beams of glory bound?

I think a broken rainbow would look so,
If we could come at it, and steal a tittle
When the Arch-Architects of air forego
Their work, and leave it drifting loose a little.

I pray you gaze a while on these lit stones
By fancy fetched from Australasian steeps,
Where moony pearl sets blazing scarlet tones,
And pale gold melts to green, and amber leaps

To bloomy violets ; and celestial blues
 Flicker to rose and ruby. You shall turn
Nowise these jewels, but their shifting hues
 To some new brilliancy will swiftly burn.

So shall true lady bend no faithful love
 Toward some new need, but from its patient heart
Rays of an unexpected light will move,
 And richer colours from its spirit start.

Mark, also, when the " noble opal " feels
 Your palm's warm glow, its dancing beauties brighten :
Breathe on this Hydrophane—the rose-tint steals
 From point to point ; and sea-green flashes lighten

The sleeping flint ! Or, lay this Hyalite
 One instant 'mid the laces of your dress,
Then note its sudden splendours ! So, 'tis right
 Love's colours be drawn forth by tenderness.

Yet, here is why I prize the shifting gem,
 And why I lay it on that dear right hand,
Of all earth's common things the core of them
 Is humblest : Sweetheart ! pray you understand !

Mean rubbish of the road-heaps ; silicates

Which gather in chalk-hollows, where, sea-bred,
Millions of billions, tubes and tunicates
Laid down their limy shells, Nature's small dead.

Who would have thought there should be use, or other
Service, for such lost Atoms of the main
When, sinking through the seas, they give the Mother
Their tiny life-garbs, to lay up again ?

But She,—who hastes not, wastes not, scorns not—takes it,
Each relic of her nameless children gone,
Stores her sea-oozes with their spoil, and makes it
Chalk down, or marble vein, or quarry-stone.

Till ages thence—of ruined nummulites,
Pharaohs their pyramids majestic build ;
And Pheidias, from a tomb of trilobites,
Calls Pallas forth, radiant with helm and shield !

So this fair wonder ; 'tis the draff of rock
Melted in fires of under-world, or broken
From snow-swept crag, or shorn in earthquake-shock ;
Of storm, and stress, and wreck the splintered token.

And yet, because Day's white rays evermore
Find their way back into such flinty things,
They glow like Seraphs' feathers. None is poor!
None mean! Heaven's light can make them mates
for kings!

A.

HEREWITH, an Amethystine Cup! see, Dear!

How soft and pure the liquid purple swims!

'Tis the Maid's stone: she hath no fault or fear

Whose untouched lips drink from such chalice-brims;

Whose virginal cold fingers clasp this stem

To quaff the sober wavelet of the streams;

And, if she wear an Amethyst, the gem

Keeps her sleep calm, and innocent her dreams.

It should be coloured as though violet satin

Changed to translucent crystal—with clear glow

Of rose-red 'gainst the Sun:—the learned Latin

“Eyelid of Venus” styles it, tinted so.

Or you may wear Avanturine with spangles

Of golden brown; or Chrysoprase which gleams

Pale apple-green; or Rose-quartz that entangles

Blushes of dawn, with white and lilac beams:

Or Sard, the Carver's gem ; or Bloodstone sombre
 Spotted from veins of Christ—the legend says—
 Or Prase ; or Plasma, sea-grey stained with umber ;
 Or Chalcedony, quenching silver rays

In milk. These all be sister-miracles
 Of Amethyst ; treasures of gnomes, brought up
 From distant caverns where the chill snake dwells
 'Mid poisonous flow'rs. Yet, most regard my cup

Far-fetched and wonderful ! If you would know
 Whence came so fair a work of mortal hands,
 Learn it lay buried many fathoms low
 Under a temple-tank in Indian lands.

Celian—"the honey-tongued"—its story writes
 In pleasant Greek ; one, named Heraclia,—
 A great Dame—in her Garden of Delights
 Saw a young stork fall on the public way :

Some cruel arrow-barb had hurt its wing
 Spread for long flight to Coromandel's shore ;
 Piteous, in dust and blood, the affrighted thing
 Lay :—but she sped, and gathered it, and bore—

Soft-folded on her breast—into her bower ;

And there, with soothing balms and unguents strange,
Healed his harsh wound, and gave him back the power
Of those broad painted pinions, to outrange

The flying crudded rack, poised in high air.

Ah, the stork's happy cry when first he rose
Over the city-roofs, and spied full clear
His road athwart the blue—as a fowl goes

On shoulder of West wind—to warm Malay !

A little grieved she that her bird sprang forth
So gladsome. Afterwards—on that same way—
When Spring brings back the storks from South to
North ;

While she did pace towards the Altar-stair,

Out from the clouds that glad cry rang again :
And lo ! th' astonished people were aware
Of a great fowl, which clanged, and left his train

Of friends ranged wedge-wise. Lighting at her feet

There he let fall this beauteous sculptured cup,
And laid his neck against her bosom sweet
For love of her : then, swiftly soaring up,

Was never seen again ! Heraclia
Quaffed from no other vessel, all her life ;
And poisons could not harm her ; nor—books say—
Pains or plagues touch her ; widow, maid, or wife !

But when she died, and this rare goblet lay
Beside her bier, there came a whirr of wing
Under the marble porch ; and bore away
The precious gift. So fell it to the King

Of Coromandel : and when he was slain
In Chittûr, some one hid it in the tank.
I bade my minion fish it up again,
And bear to thee. Drink as Heraclia drank !

N.

NEPHRITE, herewith! the sea-green China Jade;

• A sacred stone! If you would magic try
Carve I. S. I. I on a square well-made,
(Its demon-number) in the charactery

Of hieroglyphs—for Egypt knew this well

And named it Nilion from her ancient river;
In Babylon 'twas dedicate to Bel;
Kings sealed decrees therewith; aye! and, or ever

A Spaniard's eye from Darien surveyed—

Amazed—the blue Pacific's endlessness,
Those feather-cinctured Aztecs worshipped Jade
And graved their Gods upon it! Well!—impress

The figures; set it in pure gold, and breathe

Thrice at the dawning on it, thrice at night,
Repeating "Thoth" five hundred times; then wreath
A red thread round it—afterwards no wight,

Be he crowned Prince, or Lord, or Common man,
 Saith nay to any wish that shall arise !
 But you—you smile ! knowing how Woman can
 Weave stronger spells with jewels of her eyes.

Leave, then, the amulet. Still,—if you take
 A bead of grey Jade, cut with Shiva's mark,
 'Tis sure—by Hindoo mantras—not one snake
 Will dare to cross your pathway in the dark !

You “ will not walk,” say you, “ where such be found,”
 Eve of a safer Paradise ?—Then, see
 How daintily the pale green Nephrite-ground
 Backs the hot rubies in this jewellery

Of Muslim art ! An Amir's dagger-hilt,
 Patiently polished for his angry hand !
 Note how the damasked waving blade is built
 With blood-channels, and all its beauty planned

To kill, kill, kill ! exquisite devilry
 Of arabesques of death, wrought without joint
 'Mid two pure rows of seed-pearls, running free
 Hither and thither in a slot ; keen point

Like a snake's tooth ! Heed the gold script inlaid
 All up and down the steel like trickling blood !
Ya Jannat—" Ah, the Garden !"—that is said
 To signify one little thrust makes good

The road to Paradise ; and see, writ deep
Bi maruf ullah—" by God's love and fear,
 To whomso 'tis appointed I bring sleep
 Deeper than poppies !" Yet another here—

A lovely masterpiece of mortal spite
 Hafted in delicate Avanturine ;
 Sumptuously set with ruby stars of light
 As if a foeman's gore congealed had been

In drops about the gilded guard : its badge
Al hamdu wa al manat Lillahi
 "To God be praise and glory !" meaning rage
 To consecrate ! And all this gear to see

Of Jade and gems, embellishing mere Hate !
 If craftsmen to cold murder lend such grace
 What should they do for Love ? Ah, Sweetheart, wait !
 My slaves shall seek gifts in a gentler place.

N.

NACRE, and Pearls of Ormuz, now I fetch
From the bright stores of Love's enchanted Palace ;
Know you, perchance, how that poor formless wretch—
The Oyster—gems his shallow moonlit chalice ?

Where the shell irks him, or the sea-sand frets,
There, from some subtle organ, he doth shed
This lovely lustre on his grief, and gets
Peace, and the world his labour, being dead.

Ah, patient foolish fish of the Orient seas !
What else do we, the Poets, serfs of men,
But pour our souls out in soft verse, to ease
Our aches, and die ; and people make us then

Wealth, whence they draw musical ornament
For lovers' use, and sweet wise things to say ;
And wonder if the Lady did relent,
Or keep the pearls, and throw the life away.

For here be pearls, too ; pearls of lucent ray

For some one strung to mark her where she goes
A Pearl of women ; and when others say

“ Oh, you glad Lady ! who did give you those :—

“ Pearls of white thought, pearls of a lasting love ? ”

Then will you finger them on your fair throat,
And answer : “ These came deeper than from grove
Of sea-trees, green beneath the diver’s boat !

“ Full many a fathom down I hanelled them

In heart of him who did not grudge, indeed ;
He would have melted Cleopatra’s gem
In wine of verse, if I had said ‘ I need

“ ‘ New splendours for my necklet ? ’ On one day

I did not know he lived ; and that day’s morrow
I knew he loved me well ; and thence—alway—
I am his peace and pain, his crown and sorrow ! ”

“ Ah,” they will cry, “ for such strong faith, Pardie !

We, now, had shown great favour ; pearls are much ! ”
But thou, wear, and speak nought !—I give them thee
Free of all price, and a king’s hoard of such.

There was a King promised his beauteous Queen
A virgin necklace of pure matchless pearls
Which ne'er before had worn or threaded been,
Milk-white from where the Arab fisher furls

His sails of mat ; and stoops and plunges in,
And sees the light fade farther from his eyes,
And hears the dreadful, weltering, waters' din ;
Yet dares the agony, and grasps the prize ;—

Sinking a slave, with hardly means to feed ;
Returning, gift-giver to Queens and Kings,—
The brine choking his lips, the bladdered weed
Tangling his feet, but those pale precious things

Safe in his loin cloth ! And, perchance, one day
He watched the high Sultana pass in state ;
The necklace warm between her breasts, her way
Lined by a worshipping crowd, her sceptred mate

Proud of that pearl'd Consort. And his heart
Would laugh within him saying, " Lord of lands !
In what thou lovest I, too, claim a part !
She is so fair because these toilsome hands

“Tore from the waves their wealth. Yea, Pearl of pearls!

Lulu-'l-maknûn ! than Houris lovelier,
That hast the black eyes of the Prophet's Girls
Promised in Paradise, and mouth of myrrh ;

“In next life after this whose wilt thou be,
His that gave gold for thee, or mine, who went
Across the shark's jaws to the nether sea,
Nigh dead for breath, that thou might'st pace
content ?”

So, Queen of mine ! I am that Eastern King !
These pearls were never strung which I send thee ;
I ransacked unknown gulfs for them, I bring
New moonlight wonders from an unsailed sea.

Nay, and my Pearl ! I am that Arab Diver !
I stooped and plunged for you into the wave,
Returning rich—yet richer, when forever,
The treasure of the upper air I have ;

If not !—Ah, life's light quenched, and life's faith broken !
How fares it with pearl-fisher dead and foiled ?
Lost !—tossing on the billows for a token
Of his large hope, he drifts where he had toiled ;

And sea-birds—which are like sharp thoughts—consume
him ;

And hideous fish—fierce as love-longings—tear
The heart that beat so bold ; and storm-clouds gloom him
Out from the sight of Heaven. Pity him, Dear !

Y.

Yâcut Asfür: so the swart Sonar names

These golden-lighted topazes from Ind:

If you should heed his tale, their yellow flames

Gleam in the dark so that a man may find

A path thereby; or read in Holy Writ;

Or see her lips whose neck lies on his arm;

Also the topaz (levigating it)

Cures sleeplessness, scant breath, and fever's harm;

Soothes anger; strengthens wit; counterchecks spells;

Aids divination, and—on cups inlaid—

If poison lurk within, faithfully tells,

Becoming pale! Albertus Magnus said

It was Draconium—a Dragon's bone—

(Black and pyramidal) which rendered sight

To Theodosius. Nay, indeed, the stone

Was Topaz! Shall I give you this aright?

'Twas in those times when birds and beasts could talk,
Who now are wiser than to know too much ;
When newer eyes saw Shades and Angels walk ;
And younger hands feared not God's hand to touch ;

The 'Gesta Romanorum' tells it :—he,
The blind great Cæsar, hung a brazen gong
Before his Palace-gate, whither flocked free
All citizens, and whoso suffered wrong

Might beat the brass and speak—lofty or low—
Into that Emperor's ear, patient reclining ;
The purple wrapped around his sightless brow,
But in his soul the Light of Justice shining.

Thus, one day came a snake which had her young
Under the gateway-tower : she, sharply hissing,
Struck with her coils the echoing gong that hung
Against the porch. Thereon, Cæsar—dismissing

The dark-eyed girls who fanned him—cried in Greek
“Have entrance, friend !” And, gliding in, the Snake
Did homage with her crest in dust ; then, meek
Addressed the Master of the East : “I make

“ My nest beneath thy wall, where, yesternight,
Safe slept my brood—to me more fair and brave
Than those rich ropes of sards and jacinths bright
Binding thy head-cloth : but, while I, thy slave,

“ Wandered for food, there stole a porcupine
Into my hole, and ate my snakelets three ;
And hath my wonted house, as 'twere not mine !
And will not yield ! Now, therefore, unto me

Grant justice, Cæsar !” Then, the sightless King
Gave straight command they kill that beast, and lead
The Serpent safely homeward. And this thing
Was wrought ; and men lightly forgot the deed.

But, on the morrow, at the hour of noon—
When Theodosius on his day-bed slept—
Jewelled with many a jet and amber moon,
And ringed and gilt, a monstrous serpent crept

Over the patterned pavements, clomb the bed ;
And, gliding to the cheek of Cæsar, laid
From its wide jaws,—thick-set with fangs and red,—
A Topaz upon either lid ! Affrayed

The Guards beheld, and would have slain the Worm
Save that it uttered: "Let me pass with life!
Rouse ye your Lord! then will all men affirm
I pay full court-fees for my righted wife."

And lo! when Theodosius waked, his eyes
Were purged of cloud! the blessed beam of Day
Shone once more, his to joy in; and surprise
Fell on the city. But Love wins always!

Two marvels hath the Topaz! When 'tis laid—
The light wine-coloured jewel—in the sun,
Day by day you shall mark its glories fade;
Golden and crimson lustres, one by one,

Perishing into paleness! Lesson-laden
The gem's deed is, for see you not a token?
Was never tender secret of fair maiden
But lost its deep delight in being spoken.

Again, take amber-yellow Topazes!
Heat them—safe-packed in crucible—and lay
All glowing on white stone; and then, as is
The dying dolphin's change, or shift of Day

Melting to Night, so show the strange adornings

Of this gem cooling : first, like ice it gleams
Hueless, then steals a tender tint of morning's
Soft earliest saffron ; afterwards it beams

Such faint pale pink as white hedge-roses blush with ;

And last—all suddenly—a rosy glow

Shoots through the stone, as rich as rubies flush with ;

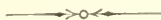
Remaining fixed ! Who made the Sun doth know

Why this should be ! Yet, clasp these jewels, too,

Near to your heart ! My next slave flies to bear

Stuff for that structure which I promised you,

A Fairy Palace, richer than Kings rear.





MOONSTONE, and Malachite and Almondine !

These for the Pleasure-Place I build with song,
Since you did say : “ Now, lodge me like a Queen !
Feign me a Bower of Fancy ! Love is strong ! ”

Here, then, I dream a dream to house you in,
A Palace for my Princess, saying that :
The spot shall be where the great hills begin,
Rolling in dark waves from the Deccan flat.

This way on Maharashtra's plains they look ;
That way to mountains and the Arab sea ;
A forest, full of many a tangled nook,
Clothes the grey crags with green embroidery.

Fair is the scene, and sweet the seasons all ;
The folk Mahrattas ; pastoral, simple, brave.
Thither my fairy architects I call,
And there a lovely Indian home I'd have !

Like to abodes of the East, the stateliest planned,
With white wide walls, high domes, gates gold and red ;
Pillared chabootras, dark with shade, shall stand
Round the first court, where steps of marble spread

Before a pierced-work porch, whereby you pass
To inner coolness, through a columned cloister,
Whose roof—rose-crystal—polished thin as glass,
Lights the veined pavements, all of alabaster.

Scented strange woods shall frame the chamber-doors,
Fountains of fragrant waters will be there ;
Along the ways, and winding stairs, and floors
Delicious things of Art shall make it fair !

Blossoms of unnamed hues and odours fine
Shall deck the courts for you—the Flower of All !
Birds in the orange-walks and lanes of vine
Shall know your name, and come when you do call !

Flowers, too, shall glow of never-fading bloom,
On screens of Jasper wrought, fencing the Bower,
Such as one sees in that white Temple-Tomb,
Reared by great Shah Jehan on Jumna's shore,

To keep for ever famous Mumtaz' name—

The Lady of his Throne—a hundred gems,
Cut to their burning hearts one flower to frame;
Then inlaid on the slabs, in anadems,

And wreaths, and arabesques of rare conceit,
A changeless garden, where the happy eye
Lights nowhere, but some posy, costly-sweet,
Fills it with joy of daintiest jewellery.

I will have columns such as Solomon
Commanded of his Djins—naming The Name
Cut in the blue of that dread signet stone,
His magic Sapphire; columns such as came

Across the Aramœan sands, across
The Erythrean billows; syenite,
Black porphyry purple-veined, the satin gloss
Of onyx; coral, crystals, chrysolite,

With abaci of silver. I will have
A milk-white warm pavilion in the midst,
Such as Siddartha, Prince of India, gave
To bright Yasôdhara. Whisper thou didst

That "Love is rich ;" and what, then, shall prevent
 Our Palace with such Amethyst lamps to light
 As gleamed o'er Cleopatra's sleep, and sent
 Rays of soft splendour through th' Egyptian night ;

Dimming Mizâr and Algol ? What forbids
 To ordain such hangings as Aladdin chose
 Of blue and amber silks ; and coverlids
 Stiff with sewn gold and seed pearls ? Ay, or those

Carpets of Iran woven thick with tints
 Of peach and tulip ; and sweet secret times
 Of Leila and Majnûn ; and pictured hints
 Of lovers' bliss ; and tender subtle rhymes

From Persian verse—seggâdehs gay, where fall
 The henna-stained small feet of Shiraz girls
 Softly as snow on roses. Therewithal
 A pleasaunce shall extend, where a stream purls

Cold from the crags, the sunny lawns along,
 Sparkling from stone to stone ; bordered by ranks
 Of blue and crimson lotus, and a throng
 Of plumed palms shading all the dappled banks

With shifting fans ; and underneath the palms,
 Moon-flowers, musk-roses, and the silvery spear
 Of aloe, and the champak's star of balms,
 With milky mogras, breathing far and near

Breath as from Paradise ; Oh, and the walks
 (New-watered every dawn) cut low and high
 With runnels, where the mountain-water talks
 Music to doves and mynas, nesting nigh ;

Ofttimes o'erleaped by golden-coated hordes
 Of antelope, the bucks leading the way ;
 The limpid-eyed light does following their lords,
 Their shyness gone ; friendly, and safe, and gay :

For in our Palace peace and love shall reign,
 And all fair creatures of the air and earth
 Be friends of man, who, elsewhere, pays his pain
 With pain and harm to these ; though Death and Birth

Are one for all, and Life the self-same sadness,
 Where Love and Pity rule not ! There shall be
 For gentle service faces full of gladness ;
 Willing swift feet, and happy vassalry ;

For good it is to obey where Love is master,
And freest he who serves the noblest Queen ;
Therefore, thou minister ! bring—fast and faster—
Moonstone, and Malachite, and Almondine !

A.

AQUAMARINE—from Fancy's treasure-hall!

Yet sad to-day for me this sea-green stone;
For on the Channel-sands your light feet fall,
And I, among these millions, walk alone.

But, wave-stained jewel! shine with brighter thought!

It was across the Deep—years back—she came;
The billows, which are of thy colour, brought
That gentle face to us. For this I name

The Beryl, water-tinted, as one stone

To spell you. On its lucent face is writ
μακρὸν ἄπεστι τόπος—"all alone,
Far hence, among the wine-dark waves, they sit."

The "happy Isles," he means, who carved that line;

For ancient sailors told a mystic story
How some had seen, had touched—in joy divine—
Makarôn nêsous, at the "Groups of Glory,"

The sweet "Sea-Paradise"—so hints this Greek!

Ah, if wave-coloured gem could guide us there;
And we, far voyaging, might sight some peak
Unknown, unnamed—cleaving the tranquil air

With pinnacles which feel no storm, and steep
Lawny and lovely, where Death does not come,
Nor change, nor hate, nor care; but always sleeps
The purple main around the perfect home!

Where we should find delightful friends and lovers,
And hear no word of woe on any lip;
Opening glad eyes, as when the Dawn discovers
A sky of blue and gold, and ill dreams slip

Back to that gloom which bred them: where the wonder
Of "whence" and "why" and "whither" would be
known;

And we should lie, like Gods, above the thunder,
The Past perceived, the Future sure and shewn;

Such were great magic! But the Isles in mind
Rise farther than the farthest ocean, Dear!
Thither to sail—with e'er so fair a wind—
Asks more than toil of many a wandering year!

We shall not reach them, save with Earth for vessel,
Sky for our sea, and for long voyage Life ;
But if Love steers, at last our sails may nestle,
Furled in those far-off Isles—past storm and strife.

R.

RUBIES, with Pearls! That's Nature's jewellery!

Look in your mirror when you speak my name,
And while you say it you may plainly see
Those charming reasons why I write the same;

Pearl-rows which gleam through rose-leaf lips of grace—
.

Ah, no!—I will not weave such worn-out posies;
I had a higher fancy for this place
Than rhymes which jingle “rubies, pearls, and roses.”

For these are *Mânikas*—stones true and good,
Which my spell brings from Burmah's steaming grove.
Such have the colour of the drop of blood
Shed on the white neck of a wounded dove.

Of such was carved the magic vial filled
With water from the “Fount of Youth” that wells
Behind the “Sea of Darkness;” water spilled
By Sultan Suleiman. Ben Ali tells

This legend, done in Persian, from the Book
 "Lights of Canopus"—how the Hebrew Khan
 Sate on the cloud-roofed mountain-tops which look
 This way on Ind, that way to Khorasan.

Angels and Djins and Peris round the king
 Paid homage, mixed with man and beast and bird,
 For on his finger was the Sapphire-ring
 Graved with the name of God, which whoso heard,

Hearing, obeyed. Wherefore the Eagles flew
 Against the sun, to shade him; she-bears brought
 Wild honey; snakes their jewels; flowers upgrew
 To make a footstool for his feet. Outraught

Over the Earth his sceptre none withstood
 In lands, or seas, or nether-worlds, or sky
 Where—like to glassy fish in glassy flood,
 Blue in blue hyaline—the Spirits lie

Unviewed, but living: and, this thing was seen;
 There drifted from the Pass a darksome cloud
 Which, gliding nigh—the mountain-crests between,—
 Took vast and filmy form, at first a shroud

That seemed to wrap some phantom-head ; but, soon
 A shape of grace whose light and colour gleamed
 From gold of setting sun, pearl of new moon,
 With wings of waving sapphire, hair which streamed

Curled jacinth on the breeze ; garments of amber
 Draped vaguely from an azure girdle-band ;
 Great breasts of rounded rose, veils that chamber
 A half-spied awful countenance ; a hand

Slow-issuing from the shade, holding a cup
 Cut from the sunset's ruby,—light compressed
 To solid splendour—" Drink this liquor up !"
 A voice cried : " drink, dread King ! The high behest

" Of Him Whose Name is on thy Signet-Stone
 Wills I bring water from the Well of Life ;
 Of all men, Suleiman ! to thee alone
 God proffers this ! a draught with power so rife

" That, quaffing it, thy flesh and blood shall take
 Even as an Angel's, comely, changeless youth ;
 Days without end, delights of sense to make
 Immortal years seem few ; insight of Truth

“Such as thy Soul hath craved for. Drink or spill!
 Have here this Vessel with its dancing draught;
 My errand is performed! Judge how ye will,
 Suleiman and the Counsellors!” A waft

Of sighing wind scattered the waning shape;
 In the King’s grasp the Ruby Vial shone;
 Far down the Pass—from splintered cape to cape—
 Faded the breaking cloud-flecks, one by one.

But, when the strange Voice ceased, Suleiman mused:—
 “Yea! good it were to drink this gift of God;
 Good to repair my days and nights misused,
 Treading with wiser steps life’s ways retrod:

“Good to win back the fiery speed of youth
 In veins which slacken; good to ever guard
 My kingdom; to strip bare beautiful Truth
 With eyes undimmed, heart’s hot desire unmarred,

“Wholly possessing her, naked and pure;
 Myself ever renewed, joyous, and strong;
 Good, too, it were to have my years endure,
 That God’s fair Temple,—which I fashion long—

“ May grow to perfect glory ; and my wars
 Close in sure peace,—I seeing, age by age,
 My people prosper under wider stars,
 In larger lands ; till, on the great last page

“ Of this World’s Book Suleiman’s name shall shine !
 Yea ! I will drink ! Yet, ye who gather near,
 Djins ! Angels ! Beasts and Fowls, Servants of mine !
 How counsel ye your King ? Fain would I hear.”

With loud acclaim, “ Drink, happy King !” said they ;
 And one with dark plumes folded, evil-eyed,
 Sakhras the Dev—who, later, stole away
 Suleiman’s signet-ring—low bending, cried :

“ Drink, Lord of Lords ! the gold of youth is bright,
 And dull the silver of slow-creeping eld ;
 And dear are wealth and power ; and soft the night
 By dawn of lovely ladies’ eyes dispelled !”

And Shîr the Djin spake :—knowing magic best—
 “ Drink, Friend of God ! the Earth’s weal rests on thee
 As sleeps an infant on a nursing breast ;
 It were not well thy Throne should vacant be !”

And Amberin the Peri, gliding close

With flutter of white plumes, said, "Drink, my King!
The joys of men and Devs in thee repose
As gems are held in cirque of golden ring!"

Assad the Lion answered for the beasts,

Laying his shagged mane at the Monarch's feet,
"Drink, Master of all forests! Thy brave feasts
Have known no wine like this, subtle and sweet!"

And Sag, the Seal, moist from the Indian main,

Drooped his black fins, and bellowed: "Sovereign,
drink!

The Water-creatures and the Fish are fain

That thou shouldst live for ever!" From the brink

Of Baikal flew the Locust, chirping: "Khan!

Drink! for all things which burrow, creep, and buzz,
Trust thee to help them, helping beast and man:
And Who doth raise the dead from one bone, Luz,

"Gives thee at one draught Angelhood!" Spake last
Hud-hud, the Lapwing, piping: "I have seen
The glory of Queen Balkis now o'erpassed;
Drink, Lord! for never such a gift hath been!"

But glancing sternly round, quoth Suleiman :

“ Are all things here ? Hath none some other rede ?
Lo ! ere I drink, and pass to God from Man,
Is every counsel uttered ? ” “ Hast thou need,

“ Great King ! ” the hill-fox barked, “ to hear what word
Kûmri will speak ? She tarrieth on her nest !
I spied her in the thorns ! ” “ Send forth a bird
To summon her ! ” quoth he. At such behest

Came Kûmri, flying from her tree ; the Dove
Who hath the neck of purple, and the wings
Of silver, and the breast filled full of love :
Heaven’s softest creature. Spake she : “ King of
Kings,

“ Pardon thy handmaid that she stayed to brood
Twin eggs which must not chill ! Thy dread command
Passed unto me, and I have left my wood !
What dost thou with the red cup in thy hand ? ”

“ I hold from Heaven a draught of life immortal,
The Mâ-ul-Haiyat ! ” Suleiman replied :
“ If I shall quaff, Death’s dark and hateful portal
Never can gape for me ! ” Then, Kûmri sighed :

“ Ah, mighty Lord ! how should a little bird,
 Which only knows to nest and brood and coo,
 Counsel great Suleiman ? Yet be this heard ;
 Hath He, Who gave the water, given, too,

“ The boon that whosoever holds thy heart,—
 Queen, lover, friend, concubine, daughter, son—
 May in the magic potion take their part ?
 For then this guerdon were a precious one ! ”

“ Nay ! ” the King said, “ to me alone the cup !
 Not larger, see ! than those eggs thou didst leave !
 I am commanded—if I will—to sup
 Its last bright drop ! ” Then, moaned the Dove :
 “ I grieve

“ They counsel thee to drink ; for all will go,
 Thy Queens, thy children, ministers, and slaves ;
 Thy best belov'd will be as last year's snow
 On these hot mountains ! Thou wilt rule mid graves,

“ Dead—thou though livest—with thy dead ; and see
 Lip after lip, pressed once to thy lip, press
 The bitter brim of Fate's black cup ; and be
 Sad in thy splendour, with such loneliness

“ As deserts know not, nor the lifeless main :
 Thy Earth around thee will grow old and grey ;
 Thy Kingdoms pass ; thy fields fall wild again,
 But thou—too favoured—shalt be young always

“ With memory only old ; yet, that will taste
 Death in the dust which blows from every tomb ;
 Death in the flowers which wave in every waste,
 Death in the mid-day light, death in the gloom !

“ Lord of all Kings ! forgive ! Love bids me speak !
 If her mate cometh not the wild dove dies !
 I would not drink hereof, who am so weak,
 Lest I might lose by gaining : Love is wise !”

Thereon departed Kûmri—flying hard
 To find her nest ere the twin eggs should chill :
 And Suleiman the King, upon the sward
 With eager hand the magic draught did spill.

I.

IDOGRASE! Garnet from the Hills of Flame!

A stone thus known hides in dark Hentha's glade
Which, when the Indians find, with joy they name,
And—proving—toil no more; their gain is made:

The "Noble Garnet!" There the colour lives
So fine and rich no wheel can cut it dim:
Flake it, or break it, every splinter gives
One glorious crimson glow from core to rim;

The colour of the blood of a man's heart
When—between red and purple—it doth sweep
Through the chief vein of all; nay, or a part
Of the heart's self, carved where the life lies deep.

So if you say "such praise is common speech!"
And "I have heard these tender things before!"
Ah, Sweetheart! let my Indian Garnets teach
A better word to you, a wiser lore;

For these are cut, Dear ! from a heart of faith ;
The colour of Love's blood within them glows.
Know you a mystical Purâna saith
There lurks in Balkh, under the lower snows,

A gem so hued, like purple wine congealed,
Styled *Chintasiddhi* (that's " Desire fulfilled "),
And, whoso lighteth on it, goes afield
Where two streams meet ; and—water being spilled

From forth his palm to all six quarters—then
He whispers " OM "—the stone laid on his tongue,
And therewith, from the forest or the glen,
A red she-wolf advances, great with young,

Who speaks a word ; and, if the man hath learned
The counter-word, that wolf will whine and moan ;
And—sudden—to a red-haired woman turned
Cry out : " I am the Servant of the Stone ! "

" Command me as thou wilt ! " Then, if he wills
A feast be spread for him on plates of gold ;
A palace builded in the hidden hills,
With courts and gardens wondrous to behold ;

Or, if he will a magic horse with wings
 To bear him through the Blue ; or mail of proof
 No steel can pierce ; or if his fancyings
 Lean towards lovely wives, or wealth, or woof

Of Kashmir silks with warp of silver thread,
 Or pearls, or poisons—she with blood-bright locks
 Fetcheth them all ! You shake a dubious head ?
 You think the heathenish Purâna mocks ?

Oh, but the Talmud hath a passage, Dear !—
 The grave, great Talmud—telling how one flouted
 Rabbi ben Zachai, at the hour of prayer,
 Who said, while that rash unbeliever doubted,

Jahveh would build gates for Jerusalem
 Of pearls and garnets, measuring every way
 Full thirty cubits—every stone of them—
 And cut them to ten cubits ; and so lay

Thresholds and lintels. Yet, that scorner laughed !
 But, next moon, sailing on the Joppa sea,
 A white wave cast him over, and he quaffed
 Salt drink of Death, down-sinking horribly ;

And touched the oozy bed ; and saw—affrayed,—
Sea-angels there, who rolled great pearls and stones
Full thirty cubits broad and long ; and made
Blocks of their mighty beauty. So his bones

Quaked at the sight, for all their angry eyes
Burned on him ; and he spake : “ Oh, Angels ! say
Why cleave ye these ? ” They answered, in stern wise,
“ We cleave these pearls and carbuncles to lay

The portals of the Holy City ! ” Judge
If he came back in better mind—what time
They washed his mouth clean of the weeds and sludge,
And heard his trembling tale ! Ah, Darling ! rhyme

Relates not half the marvels which lie hid
Behind our mocking light ! My next slave goes
To stranger spots than he ; and, since I bid,
Brings thee a Gem from Aaron’s breast-plate rows.

A.

THE third row of the holy Breast-Plate stood

“ Agate, and Ligure, and an Amethyst.”

Great Jewels, graven with the tribes of God,

Hallow my page ! and thou, be thy brow kissed

By Seraphim, as I hang this above it ;

Thy hands held up by Cherubim to pray ;

Thy soul made sure that splendid spirits love it ;

Thy feet set fast upon the blissful way !

For, though I bring thee hither but in fiction

“ Ephod of blue and gold,” with mystic gem,

Let my verse pass, but be its benediction

Lasting, and crown thee like a diadem !

Since prayer fulfils itself which rises rightly

From lips by gentle love made true and sweet ;

So, let these belted Agates glitter brightly ;

As when Harouin cast beneath his feet

Coats of the camp, and donned white robe and mitre ;
And round his waist the "curious girdle" tied ;
And drew the thongs and gilded ouches tighter,
Hanging his breast-plate high—Oh, beautified

By wondrous work of "gold and blue and crimson,
On fine-twined cloth"—the gold beat out four-square
A span each way ; and gold chains linked the rims on,
With fourfold ranks of jewellery set fair,—

First Sardius, Topaz, and the Jaspis green ;
Next Smaragd, Sapphire, and an Adamant ;
Third, Ligure, Agate, Amethyst were seen
Laid on chased beddings ; and the fourth line burnt

With Beryl, Onyx, Chrysolite : each stone
Carved with a Tribal name ! And he would go
Behind the Veil ; where—shut from Earth, alone—
He saw and heard what Israel might not know ;

For there the Ark was, and the Cherubin
Beat from pure gold, with golden pinions spread
Shading the Mercy-Seat. There God with him
Talked ; and none other heard the dread words said.

But, if the days were evil—if the camp
 Had sinned—the Agate changed its white to black ;
 Waned the green Smaragd like a dying lamp ;
 The Sapphire half its heavenly blue did lack !

Ah ! if our gems of human love we bore
 Behind that Veil, would many—any—keep
 Their beauty of the laughing Day ? Would more
 Be dimmed, than brightened ? See what legions weep

Of love-lorn maids for wooers proved untrue !
 What cohorts of true wooers curse false maids !
 Let us not enter in ! Enough, if you
 Are fair, and I your poet fond, who braids

These jewelled fancies for your hair ! At last,
 I think where Love has lived, it cannot die ;
 Its flame may wane, its lustrous light seem past,
 But what once shone shines on eternally !

Yes ! lift the Veil ! In that dread darkness pray I
 Heaven make your years all happy—till we know—
 Th' Angelic peace compass and fill you—say I—
 And God's love come when Earthly love must go !



AMBER! You shall have Amber beads to bind
Your smooth brown hair—threaded with Lazulite!
I send my minion on swift wings to find
These hidden spoils of Earth for your delight:

And when—round the Madonna's painted head—
You limn aërial backgrounds, do you know
That the soft azures which your pencils spread
Come from this Lazulite—gold-spangled so?

“Ultramarina,”—those same sea-blue stones—
Dug from dark caverns fringing Baikal's lake—
The lucent airs, and large ethereal tones,
And passages of painter's skies do make.

I think if you should delve such Lazulite
As hides within my heart—all gold and blue—
The gold of it would make your days seem bright,
The blue of it might arch fair skies for you:

Well ! take or leave ! You are too rich to need it ;
 And love is sorrow—so say all the wise—
 Though lovers never yet have deigned to heed it,
 Since first your sweet sex cost us Paradise !

Is Love so sad ? This Amber, clear and golden,—
 Wept from great trees which, when the woods began,
 Waved boughs, it may be, over lovers olden,
 Shaded their slumbers, built primeval man

His nuptial bowers : for, see ! the bead encloses
 Winged things which fluttered in life's goodlihead ;
 Here is embalmed memory of meadow-roses,
 An epitaph on unseen summers dead.

So, too, for me, the Indian name of Amber
 Enshrines the pathos of a Buddhist page :—
 Ah, now ! no story for a lady's chamber !
 Only the fable of some old-world Sage !

Yet, you shall hear : she was Suvarna, "Shining,"—
 The soft word pictures all the grace we praise
 In Beauty's inner beam, subtly combining
 Body and Soul, a perfumed lamp whose rays

Gleam dim through alabaster. Legends note us
 Her "eighteen perfect points," the fragrant hair ;
 The eyes clear-cut as petals of the lotus ;
 The shapely nose, the little faultless pair

Of ears carved shell-wise, and the close-set bosoms
 Rounded "like tortoise-shell ;" the brown soft arms ;
 Small hands, fine feet, mouth "red as bimba-blossoms,"
 Gait of a pacing roe, form showing charms

Like Sachi's, Queen of Heav'n. Lords did adore her,
 Ranas and Khans from many wondrous lands :—
 Kings came on elephants to kneel before her,
 Their kingdoms' jewels in their humbled hands.

When she would dance it seemed like Music moving,
 Visible, living ! When she sang, the Rose
 Forgot its nightingale ! the Koil loving
 Stayed in his midway note to listen close !

When one had seen Suvarna—says my story—
 Fresh from the bath, in robes of gold and red,
 Her beauty glittering forth with youth's full glory,
 Glad, in her palace, on an ivory bed ;—

All women seemed her shadows! Still—'tis written—
Lovers were many, but beloved none :
Not once with Kama's arrow sank she smitten ;
This sun-light Lady wearied of the sun !

Then she heard Buddha preach ; and fierce upon her
Fell passion for that holiness he taught :
She would ' Bhikshûni ' live ; no heart should own her !
Freed should her soul be, and her footsteps brought :

Into the " Noble Path ! " So went she lonely
Climbing the hill-side to Lord Buddha's Cave ;
Hungering for Rest and Righteousness,—those only—
Thirsting for sweet melodious words which save.

But, on the midmost steep, whose rugged ways
Wounded the rose-red palms of her light feet,
A streamlet brimmed a pool : Suvarna stays
To sit and drink the water cool and sweet.

Thus, bending in the shadow of the mountain
To dip her hand and sip the crystal wave,
Like a steel mirror the translucent fountain
Back to her gaze her own bright image gave.

There was the braided splendour of her tresses !
 There the deep wonder of her large dark eyes !
 There the brown neck and breast, made for caresses,
 The flower-soft mouth, the shadowed charm which lies
 In curve of nape, and sweep of silken shoulder ;
 The supple tapering waist, the swelling round
 Of hip and shapely limb :—her own beholder
 Suvarna marvelled at the form she found.

“ Was I so fair ? ” she sighed : “ Well might they love
 me,
 Rajas and Sirdars ! And what days we had,
 Good, glorious days ! before the ache did move me
 To hear this Rishi. Am I sane or mad

“ To mount his hill ? The Gods have given me beauty
 As to the Ketuk-flower they gave perfume ;
 And gold bands to their bees ! Is it not duty
 The bee should suck the honey of the bloom ? ”

Therewith her tears welled, falling—pearl by pearl—
 Into the pool, which broke its glass with ripples ;
 Vanished the image ! Then the Indian Girl
 Tied the silk choli-strings beneath her nipples ;

And drew her sari round ; and, rising, turned,
Taking the downward path, and softly saying :
“ Nay !—for such grace and youth must not be spurned !
I was not made for penance and for praying :

“ Some last, best, lover waits me ! ” So, she runs
Laughing, adown the slope—distantly hearing
Gay murmurings of the town, and pleasant tones
Of pipe and lute ; and feet of hamals bearing

Brides to their bridegrooms, “ They who will may tread
The Noble Road,” quoth she, “ be mine the valley
Where pleasure lives ! ” But Buddha overhead—
Calm in his cave—beheld Suvarna’s folly ;

And pitied her ; and, pitying, sought to save :
So (saith the tale) by magic utterance stripping
His own form off, assumed the aspect, brave
And winsome, of a Nautch-Girl, featly tripping

Along the Damsel’s path ; more heavenly fair,
Comelier and brighter than Suvarna’s brightness ;
With tender wistful gaze, and gracious air,
Soft happy smile, and steps of dancing lightness.

Amazed, enchanted, "Ah, thou loveliest One!"

Suvarna cries: "Oh, not of Earth, but Heaven!
What is thy name? what errand goest thou on?"

Beautiful, perfect, Sister! art thou given

"To comfort and confirm me? Come with me!"

Answered the stranger,—soft as running water,
Or wood-doves cooing—"Sweet such company!

I am content!" And so Suvarna brought her

With tender hand in tender hand enlacing,

And hearts close-beating, and commingling eyes,
Far down the hill. As that bright pair went pacing,
Melted with gentle love Suvarna sighs:

"Shiva! how fair thou art! th' Asoka's honey

Draws not the sunbird as thou drawest me!

More than to list the wisdom of the Muni

It were to rest thy head upon my knee,

"And weave thy waist a girdle with mine arms,

And press a thousand-times thy mouth of wonder:

Dear! let us sit—the sun grows hot! thy charms

Ask shade, like palm-buds in the month of thunder!"

So sate they down ; and, locked in close embraces
 Fed on each other's fairness—love for love—
 Hands joined, arms twined, locks intermixed, soft faces
 Nestled together like a dove with dove :

Till, fondling her to rest, her silk lids kissing,
 Toying with taper hands, and smooth dark skin,
 Suvarna's self sank into sleep, yet pressing
 That beauteous maid her circling arms within.

All the fierce noon and afternoon they slumber ;
 At eve the Indian girl, starting, awoke :

.
 I said this was no tale for lady's chamber !
 Ah, can you bear to hear what terror broke

On sad Suvarna's gaze ? Clasped to her heart
 A festering corpse tainted the air ; its bones
 Ridged the shrunk flesh ; the putrid inward part
 Blotched it with green and purple ; cold as stones

Glared its glazed orbs ; all the fair grace was fled
 Like gold fruit mouldered, or a lily's crown
 Withering to foulness ! Oh, that awful Dead !—
 Suvarna flung her horrid playmate down,

And shrieked, veiling her eyes ; and ran a space,
 Wringing her palms. Then, nigh at hand, she saw
 Lord Buddha looking on her tearful face
 With countenance of majesty and awe.

“ Daughter ! ” spake he, “ for this thing thou hast left
 The path which should have led thee unto bliss !
 Lo ! as the flower fades and the fruit is reft,
 Love ends in parting, Beauty fails to this !

“ As she was, so shalt thou be, and thy kind !
 Nay, if it chagrined thee to kiss a skull,
 Be done with Love ! always—red lips behind—
 Grin those white jaws for flames of funeral !

“ And worse things be than funeral pyres, or parting ;
 The Spirit, sick with passion and sweet pain,
 Flits back from Death to Life for direr starting
 On Earth’s wild wheel, and builds its house again :

“ Since, what thou art, thou makest ! Trishna breeds it !
 Thine is the prison, and the gaoler thou !
 The snake which poisons man his own heart feeds it ;
 Yet—if thou wilt—wake from this madness now,

“Vanquish thy longings! Come! there is no sorrow
 Like Pleasure; no delight like passions slain!
 But if thou lust for life the stern To-morrow
 Will find thee lost in thy self-chosen gain,

“As the grey crane dies by the dried-up lake
 Where she laid foolish eggs. Meditate Truth!
 Enter the Noble Way! Wise barter make
 For blest Nirvâna with thy grace and youth!”

.

Then did Suvârna, with impatient hand,
 Tear from her neck the amber beads and gold;
 Shook down her tresses from their jewelled band,
 And cut, and cast them from her; wild and bold;

And meekly followed Buddh. Was that done well?
 Ah, Love! love is so lovely, who can say?
 I only know this life! if Love be Hell
 Then Hate is Heaven! Let us not go her way!

D.

DIAMONDS! Now—womanlike—your eyes grow brighter
Flashing the sparkle back of such fair things;
Hold both hands up! I sent a demon-fighter
To wrest these wonders from barbaric kings:

Mâsh, almâsh, hîra, hêtih! white, and blue,
The flaming golden sort, the black, and pink!
Here be brave carcanets and cirques for you
A-blaze with beams, cut sunlike! Did you think

Poets were poor? Nay! if our fancy choose
To delve old Earth, down to her deepest treasures,
Or spoil black-bearded Sultans, see! the Muse
Denies her children no such airy pleasures.

And wise men wot Golconda's brilliant gem,
Tried in the fire, turns black, mere common fuel.
But these, my fairy stones, outvalue them,
Time-proof and flame-proof! Here's a beauteous jewel

My minion brings—the “Syamantakan ;”
 Satrâjita the King worshipped the Sun
 At dawning when his rosy course began,
 At evening when his golden road was run ;

Reciting holy *Gayatrî*, and given
 To all high deeds, a pious Prince and tried ;
 Wherefore one morn—’tis said—that Lord of Heaven,
 The Regent of the Sun, stood by his side ;

Unclasped a crest-gem from his crown, and bound it
 On Prince Satrâjita, bending in prayer,
 The folk of Dwâraka, much-wondering, found it
 At the King’s throat, burning the dazzled air

With beams of glory : and the influence shed
 From that enchanted stone caused rain to fall ;
 Averted serpents, pests ; quickened the dead ;
 Brought victories to the Realm, fortune to all

If good men wore it ; but an evil one
 Died of its lustre. Oh, you laugh ! yet listen :
 Prasêna, the King’s brother, put it on
 And rode a-hunting with that gem a-glisten

Over his head-cloth ; and a Lion slew

Horseman and horse ; but Jâmbabân the Bear
Killed the strong beast, and took the spoil, and threw
The sun-gem to his youngest cub to wear :

For Krishna tracked their foot-prints ; pierced the wood ;
Came to the cavern black, heard the Bear mother
Say : “ Sleep, my Babe ! now will our days be good ;
This is the Sun’s great Diamond, and none other ! ”

She, seeing Krishna, “ Ahi ! ahi ! ” roared :
Then Jâmbabân rushed forth, and waged fierce fight ;
But lost the Sun-stone to its doughty Lord ;
Who died a-bed, slain for that jewel bright.

A wild, rude, Sanskrit story ! Yes ; but wrought
With touches of old wisdom ’broidered in it !
Flash ‘ Syamantakan ’ in light of thought
And note this gleam :—white knowledge, if we win it,

Is granted from One Source—for joy or dolour—
To whomso hath it, Prince, or Man, or Beast,
Yet, as each crystal by its inner colour
Stains the pure beam enkindled from the East.

So shall the nature of each soul, endoubled

By will on mind, dye fair or dark that ray.

Oh, you may wear this Diamond, Dear! untroubled;

Look! on your neck it glitters clear as Day!

E.

EMERALDS ! The colour, Fanny ! of the light
Sifted through lime-leaves on a summer-noon ;
Or curl of crested wave, when foam-bells bright
Fringe the green furrows of the sea in June.

Such should true emeralds be ! green—it is said—
As throat of parroquet ; or spark quick-twinkled
From fire-fly's lamp ; or fresh unfolded blade
Of water-grass ; or lotus-leaf unwrinkled

New risen 'mid the pool, or glow which fringes
The gleaming amethysts in the peacock's train :
Sourindro Mohun holds " all Virtue hinges
On tints like these, and, if there show a stain

Yellowish or clouded, do not seek to heal
Snake-bites with such, nor carve a love-name on
them ! ”

But mine are ' Marakats ' whose hearts reveal
Greener and greener glories as you con them ;

A necklace for a queen! Not that you need it!

One gem-mark was already on your neck
Set by the Power who made us—as I read it—
Your throat with one soft little foil to speck

For contrast's sake: as lovely dames, who brightened
With high-bred charms King Louis' court or Anne's,
Laid on their damask cheeks patches which heightened
The tender pink, just spied above their fans.

Yet, be you heedful of this lucent jewel,
Soft as the moon-ray seen through leaf-green waves
By those sea-maids whose love, earnest but cruel,
Draws down the sailor, dead, to their cold caves:

For wise men write that, like as diamonds hidden
Under the pillow of a sleeping bride,
Will make her closed lips open, all-unbidden,
To tell if ever any lips beside

Touched their ripe crimson, so the Emerald's hue—
By reason that this is the stone of Faith—
Reports when plighted lovers prove untrue,
Ever so widely parted! Mansoor saith:

It burgeons for true love, like sprays of henna ;
 But withers, at a broken vow to white,
 Or falls in tintless fragments. Avicenna
 Bade breathe upon it, at the morning light,

And, if the One belov'd were false, a mist
 Would pass athwart its verdant lustre, telling
 Of oaths forsworn ! When frail Zuleika kissed
 Yusûf,—her Lord, in Pharaoh's palace dwelling,

Knew by his signet. Doubt you that was so ?
 Yet think how stones are built in Earth's abysses !
 What wonderful dark secrets Gnomes must know !
 How they may hear men's whispers, sighs, and kisses,

Living in gems—as Celsus held they live !—
 When George the Third was throned, an emerald fell
 Out from his crown ; and, did the Fates forgive ?
 America was lost ! you know it well !

But still you smile—American by birth—
 Thinking that loss a gain ! Well, I'll be grave !
 Esteem the emerald noblest stone of Earth
 When you shall hear the Queen of Sheba gave

An emerald vase to Suleiman the King,
Cut from the mother-crystal—flawless, shining—
By life-long labour. Oh, a perfect thing,
Leek-green, playing to blue and gold! Reclining

Within his summer-tent Suleiman bade
Amru his steward bear it to the Palace:
At the first step which bearded Amru made
Down sank he dead! The precious carven chalice

Had fall'n, in ruined beauty; but, a wretch—
White with the third degree of leprosy—
Begging against the gate, his arm did stretch,
And caught the glowing cup,—and saved! And, see!

Clean grew his flesh, again, as babe's new-born!
Then the King gave command Balkis the Queen,
Be brought to audience on the morrow's morn;
And, awful-cyed, he told what deeds had been:

How this was dead, that healed. But she replied,
Low-laughing; "King! It was not cut to give
Into the hands of liars! Amru died
Touching the Gem of Truth; thy slave will live

“Henceforward whole, because whole was his mind!

The mother-stone of this had virtues vast;
Only true lips must touch it! False will find
Thy Hermon honey slay therein! ’Twill cast

“All ills from such as keep a sinless heart!”

Then quoth King Suleiman, “Which man is he,
Save my poor Syrian who did bear the smart
Of God’s hard hand—yet love Him? Let him be

“My Steward! Let the dreadful Cup be laid
Within the Temple of the Lord!” So fell it
To keeping of the Priests. When Cæsar made
Judæa a spoil, some Roman lord did sell it

To one who kept that “furnished upper room”
In whose sad walls the Master sate at meat
With His disciples, ’ere the deed of doom,
And the Last Supper’s bread did meekly eat;

And the Last Supper’s wine meekly did pour,
Saying: “These be my Body and my Blood!
Do this in my remembrance!” At that hour
The emerald cup of Sheba ’twas which stood

At Christ's right hand ; and in that cup did glisten
 The noblest wine which ever vine did shed ;
 Soothing with peace the souls of all who listen,
 Feeding the spirits of the quick and dead.

Then the Crusaders won it ! Ninety fell
 Fighting round Godefroi for the beaker golden :
 That Cup which kissed the mouth of Christ—they tell—
 Was wet with gore ! A Paynim of the Soldan

Lay, slain by twenty wounds, clutching the thing.
 The soldiers of the Cross freighted a ship—
 Proud Genoa's swiftest caravel—to bring
 The prize to Italy : and no man's lip

Dared touch it, all those quiet centuries
 It lay in San Lorenzo. Next, it came
 To France,—or Spain, some tell : but he, who is
 Our Master, and the noblest English name

Of living singers—holds (in Arthur's lay),
 Arimathœan Joseph brought it here
 To Glastonbury, where the black-thorn spray
 Blossoms at Christmas, every mindful year ;

Nay, that one saw it! saw the glorious Grail!

(Percival's Sister—pious, meek, a maid)

Glide, with a sudden radiance, rosy, pale,

Down a long silvery moon-path, through the shade:

“Rosy,” “rose-red”—he sings—“and, in it, beatings,

As though alive,” and music, heavenly-tender

Better than we can blow or touch, with meetings

Of tones celestial; and a burning splendour

Of Angels' feathers, fanning airs unfelt;

And crimson samite draped; and stars which darted

Hither and thither, leaving lines that melt

In sparkles on the Blue; and dim shapes started

Forth from the Void! Yet, only three,—or two—

Believed with Arthur; he “who knew alway

Himself no vision, and the high God knew

No vision,” nor Lord Christ. But still I say

The Cup was Emerald, glassy-green! I trow

Where now it is, but dare not have it given;

Could even Galahad dare? Could Arthur? No!

Dear lips of Christ! Rich wine, viintaged in Heaven!

L.

LIGURE! the holy 'Leshem,' now I bring,
Judæa's Gem, Jacynthus styled of old:
Mark how the sunbeams flood with gold this thing,
And how its dark heart stains th' imparted gold!

Jacynth, the stone which has a sister-flower;
The jewel wine-red, and the blossom, too:
These both were snow-white once, until the hour
When God Apollo Hyacinthus slew.

Ever since then *âu*, *âu* is on the blossom
And *âu* *âu* writ upon the stone as well;
And the life-blood from the Greek boy's hurt bosom
Mars both with blackness,—so old legends tell.

Ligures they wore, set in an iron torque
At Rome, on midnights, laying *Lémurës*
When May's Ides came, for then the Ghosts did walk;
Then were the *Lemuraliu*. All the trees

Drowsed in the Court ; streets sleeping still—no sound !

Save if an owl screeched, or a town-dog bayed
 Seeing the sheeted Shades pass o'er the ground
 Tip-toe, a-glide, with eyes which made afraid.

But he would steal—the House-master—barefoot,
 Softly, not speaking any word for dread ;
 Yet snapping oft his fingers, if some root
 Of vine or fig tripped him, like some one dead

At devilish tricks. But, when—all mute—he came
 Safe to the fountain, there he laved his face,
 And hands ; and rubbed the Ligure, whispering name
 Of every restless Lar haunting the place.

Next in his mouth he put the nine beans black,
 But must not glance behind, turning to go ;
 While, one by one, he flung them o'er his back,
 Muttering "*his fabis meam redimo*

Domum !" "With these black beans I buy content."

Ite, paterni Manes ! "Good Souls, quit !"

Then, nine times beat a sheet of brass, and sent
 The Ghosts to Hades, where their fellows flit.

Poor Ghosts! Love would not fear! Love dreads not
death,

Nor doom, nor darkness! See this Jacynth brought
From Hedjaz! On its gold a verse which saith

“With thee was well, Belovéd!”—and, inwrought

The Cross of Christ with Islam’s crescent moon! . . .

A Christian maiden loved a Muslim youth,
And he loved her; oh, heart and soul, Majnûn
Loved Mariam the Nazarene. In sooth

One look wrought all! Young Majnûn did repair

Mosque-wards to pray; the loud-voiced Muazan
Stood white against the blue; in either ear

Pressing his thumb, and crying, “*Ash’had-do-an*

La-illah’l-lul-la-ho!” “Ye Faithful! know

There is no God but God!” *Hya ul-as-salaat*

“Quicken your steps to pray!” *As-sal-la-to*

Khyrun min an-naum, “Better, Believers! that

Ye pray than sleep!” This cry was in his ears,

The faith of Allah in his heart firm kept;

When Mariam passed—and glanced: and lo! the years

Found their crowned instant: Love, full-plumed, up
leapt!

Beautiful was she as upon its stalk

The tulip newly nodding ; heavenly-sweet
The music of her voice ; when she did walk
The glad grass seemed to kiss her light fine feet !

Face, form, as 'twere a Houri in the house ;

Eyes so divinely lustrous that their splendour
Filled every heart with worship ; and her brows
Drawn like black bows over the eyelids tender,

And shadowy lashes ; and her teeth of pearl

Between the rose-leaf lips ; and rounded arms,
And high white bosoms ! Such a Christian Girl
The Prophet had forgotten for her charms

Amina and Khadidja ! So they loved,

Body and soul and blood blended to one
In burning passion ; and this passion proved
Sorrow, as always. Majnûn was Said's son

Sheykh of the Gate, a hot Believer : she

Sole child of Nicolas the Merchant. Never
Dared they to meet if night's complicity
Veiled not their trembling joys. Cruel ones ever

Watched them, incensed an Infidel's pale face
 Should draw an Islamite with Sorcery ;
 Incensed a Maid of Christ should yield her place
 'Mid saints, a Muslim's Light o' Love to be.

But, through the jealous lattice of her bower
 Sometimes he took the comfort of her eyes
 And by the lute's low voice, or some dropped flower
 Knew it was well with her, or otherwise.

For many waters shall not overflow,
 Nor sharpened daggers daunt, nor angry faces
 Affright, nor bitter doctrines check, nor woe
 Change a true love, which in the holy places

Kneels nearest God. Yet, on our little star
 Purged must it be by Sorrow's fellowship ;
 And pale the visages of lovers are
 With earthly griefs, when happy lip meets lip

In those Elysian meads where Death is dead.
 So, on this parted pair, and on their city
 Fell evil times ; the Plague, with footsteps red
 Strode through the Land, slaying—*sans* pause or
 pity—

Wife, husband, youth and age. A strong man stood
 One moment whole,—the next, there crept a thrill,
 Like the cold breath of Azrael, through his blood ;
 His eyes dimmed, breath came quick, body grew
 chill ;

Spasms rent his frame ; his poisoned flesh waxed white
 With blotches ; soon he sank in mortal pain ;
 Save where, after deep trance, Nature's kind might
 Flung the taint forth :—then quick he rose again.

Thus, on the self-same day, the Pestilence
 Smote these fair lovers, fated bitterly.
 Sighed Majnûn, 'mid his friends : “ Now go I hence,
 Never again my Lady's face to see !

“ Never again in this world ! Nay—and worse !
 Never in that beyond ; for she will be
 Where Christians are. Sing not another verse
 Of the Death-Sura ! Pray no prayers for me

“ To Allah ! If a Mussulman I die
 I shall gain Paradise, but not with her ;
 Christ ! take me where she goes ! Lord Isa, I
 Am Nazarene, as Marian ! ” The stir

Of Mollahs rending robes, and curses bitter
 Of angry kin, his earnest accents drown ;
 In a waste place the bearers of his litter
 Unburied flung that outcast's body down.

But while for Marian's sake Majnûn foreswore
 Friends, Faith, and Paradise, his lady lay
 Sick as to death—not knowing how they bore
 Her chosen forth—and all that piteous day

“Majnûn !” she sighed, “Oh, Majnûn, Pearl of Lovers !
 Death cometh, and we shall not meet again !
 Nevermore, my Soul's Life ! the black grave covers
 Thy poor white Dove, whose feathers thou wert fain

“Ofttimes to smooth and kiss ; and,—woe is me !—
 Whither I go there canst thou never come ;
 For thou art of the Prophet's tribes ; and we
 Another people, with another home

“Beyond this world. But, see now, Jesu tender !
 In all thy Father's Houses which would give
 Rest to my soul ? what untold joy and splendour
 Could comfort Marian, if she might not live

“Forever, and forever, and forever
 With Majnûn, be that Heaven, or be it Hell?
 If he may come where Thou art never—never—
 Oh, Christ, my Lord! then let me go to dwell

“In what place for his peace Allah is keeping!”
 And those around her bed chided the Maid,
 Deeming she raved; but dreamlike, as if sleeping,
 Soft went she on, and this in whispers said:

“Dear God, forgive! if pardon for such sin
 Hath been or can be; still, I cannot take
 A path beyond the tomb he walks not in,
 A heaven he will not share. Therefore, I make

“Sad choice, but settled:—letting go Thy love
 Ah, gentle Christ! lest I lose his, and sit
 Amid Thine angels in the bliss above
 Winning Thy bless'd peace, and hating it

“For lack of Majnûn. Is it Heaven's command
 None shall attain it, save at thy fair feet?
 Then he will not attain! But I must stand
 Beside Majnûn before the judgment-seat!

“ Oh, any Death save parting! any doom
 Except what sunders us! Forgive, dread Lord!
 Friends, is it evening? round me swims the room!
 Listen! bury sad Mariam in the yard

“ Where lie the Muslims of our quarter. Yea!
 I bid ye list—I, who was Nazarene
 All my true maiden years, die here to-day
 A Mussulmanî! What his faith hath been

“ That same is mine! hear me! I testify
 There is no God but Allah, and——” They smote
 The little trembling lips, and drove that cry
 Of tender heresy back in her throat,

Whose milky beauty throbbed—and hushed. And, then,
 Scorning the renegade, they tore the Cross
 From her cold breast, and bade the “bearing-men”
 In that waste spot her shamëd body toss

Where Majnûn’s lay. So, thus it was beheld,
 When the Moon rose upon the dismal plain,
 The jackals, prowling ’mid the corpses, yelled
 And fled, to see a dead man rise again;

For Majnûn rose, healed by his trance ; and spied
Death-pale, yet breathing, moving, beautiful,
Mariam his lady, Mariam at his side ;
Mariam ! and life not finished !—Dutiful

With tenderest lips he touched her face, her head ;
Warmed with his breast her bosom ; chafed her feet
Full-softly, like two fair white birds, half-dead ;
And spake her name, murmuring such love-words sweet

That through the numbed sense to the drowsy heart
Stole their awakening music, and she lifted
Her silken lids,—and gazed—and with glad start
Flew to his neck. Oh, when were lovers gifted

With such a splendid moment ? For some space
Hung they together, feeding life with kisses,—
Each kiss a cordial—then they left that place
With faint rejoicing steps. And what long blisses

Were theirs for many years verse cannot tell.

Dear ! do you like my Jacynth for its story ?
Yet, where, at Death, those loving souls did dwell
Who knows ? God's many names may have one glory !

A.

“WHAT! A gold coin amid these jewelled treasures!

Why send me such a relic?”—so you say—

“Good to enhance some antiquary’s pleasures;

Stamped for dead people, in a buried day!”

True, now, but look a little! If one ponder

The legend of this piece, its gold may shine

With lustre leaving dull the gems of wonder

Which I did lay in those dear hands of thine.

An Aureus of the Roman Empire—see!

And, on its face, in plain imperial letters,

MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS—He

Was Master of our earth. Rome’s iron fetters,

Linked over lands and seas, were held by him,

The awful purple of the Cæsars wearing;

And triumph-crowned! for, mark, along the rim

DEVICTIS MARCOMANNIS. He was bearing

That year Pannonian laurels (one—six—eight—
 In era of our Lord). Gaze on the face
 Pictured from one most noble, wise, and great,
 First of his age, and foremost of his race.

Consider! Pious souls have been, but he
 Feared Heaven, worshipped himself! And just have
 been ;

But he, higher than Law, bowed down to be
 Law's officer! Well-taught, in books deep-seen,

Daily he sate at school! Master of war,
 Bloodshed he stayed; pitied his vanquished foes;
 Pardoned his haters! Set far off, a Star
 Of sovereignty, he ranked himself with those

Born to serve Man! Enriched with all the East,
 With all the West; Lord of the wealth of Rome;
 He lay on earth, drank from the stream, made feast
 Of fruits and roots! Yet, to rear porch and dome

Stately at Athens, splendid on old Nile;
 To dower learning, scatter truth, spread good;
 To help the thoughts which help mankind meanwhile,
 For those he poured his sesterces in flood!

Majestic, melancholy, lofty, mild ;

Holier than saints, than sages more enrapt ;
 One hour listening to Fronto like a child,
 The next, in royal paludamentum lapped

Governing the world ! Ah, measure what a man !

White in an age dark and unbeautiful :
 Highest, yet humblest : since the kings began
 No heart so kingly, large, and dutiful.

Regard him ! does my Emperor pleasure you ?

Being but a man I only know that here—
 If we shall set apart some three or two—
 The flower of humankind blooms bright and dear.

This is the best we are ! “ Verissimus ”

Hadrian did style him ! When the Senate named
 Marcus sole Cæsar, spake he : “ Seat with us
 My Lucius Verus also ; I were blamed

“ Keeping no place upon his Father’s throne

Whose Father loved me.” When the eagles fled
 Before the Marcomanni, he alone—
 Loathing red war—the reeling legions led

To victory. At his life—too pure to please—
Avidius Cassius aimed, joining foul hands
With Cæsar's beauteous Empress: foiling these
The loving peoples and the loyal bands

Slew that arch rebel, sent his severed head
A tribute to the Court; but Marcus sighed
Seeing the bloody gift; and, musing, said:
“Happier I were to pardon!” when he spied

The accusing list, setting in deadly row
Names of the plotters, royally he reads
The scroll to shreds; quoth he: “Let me not know
Mine enemies, till I have made them friends!”

And as he lived, so died he; grand and meek,
Maintaining Antonine's sublimity,
Who, for last watchword, hardly strong to speak,
Gave the centurion “Equanimity.”

Hear Marcus teach: “If thou with Gods would'st dwell,
Keep a contented mind; follow that guide
Whom Jove hath lodged within thy breast to tell
His will, and lead thee to the better side.

“ Either the Universe is Chaos, Chance ;
Or else the Universe is Order, Law ;
If that—die ! and let pass the drunken dance ;
If this—live and rejoice, in Love and Awe.

“ Offer that inner rule of Heaven’s high Lord
A strong soul ripened by the life below ;
A soldier at his post waiting the word ;
A heart too grateful to be loath to go.

“ All which befitteth thee, befitteth me,
Thou Scheme of God ! What to thee cometh right
To me comes right : if life or death it be
So let it be ; good is it in my sight,

“ If good in Jove’s ! Oh Mother Earth ! I take
My rest with thee, right gladly lying down ;
What ! shall the poets praise Athens, and make
Songs to the City of the Violet Crown,

“ And none praise Jove’s great City, where we spent
Our span of years ? ’Twas sweet therein to dwell ;
Yet being bid to quit, go well content !
No tyrant orders ; no harsh laws compel !

“Who opened thee the City-gates, now closes;
 Who named thee freeman, sends thee off the wall:
 Depart obedient! Is there one supposes
 The Ruler of the Rulers knows not all?”

“Depart submissive, glad! Die unrepining!
 There is a Greater guardeth thee than thou,
 Dearer than to thyself thy life’s combining
 Was to the Cosmos; death is better now!”

Was he not perfect? Will you scorn to wear
 His aureus ’mid the gems? Yet lurking wonders
 Perplex male minds, studying your strange sex, Dear!
 For gazing on his countenance one ponders

That grudge Faustina bore him. She—his wife—
 Sharing the Purple, Lady of his glory,
 Stained the imperial honours of his life
 With shameful passions. Nay, I spare the story!

They knew it—to the lowest Roman slave:
 Living he would not punish; dead he made her
 Obsequies splendid; stateliest mourning gave,
 And in a glorious milk-white tomb he laid her.

Ah, you *will* wear! You sternly judge Faustine!

Yet one point more:—his sword he whetted sharp,
To smite the followers of the Nazarene;
Hated the Christians, and burned Polycarp—

For Rome's great sake! You lay it by again!

But, this—at best—we are; doubtless, 'tis pity
He could not love our gentle Christ, nor win
One woman's breast. Still, when he died, his City

Voted him God; and every citizen

Bought bronzes of him, built them shrines at home;
Made him their household Lar, their Man of men;
Faustina's fool, Christ's foe, crowned saint of Rome!

I.

SEE now ! an Ivory Casket for your treasures,
Cut from a tusk some lord of Elephants
Yielded, besieged amid his forest-pleasures,
By circling foes. The creamy surface vaunts

Turquoise, in blue stars set, with Iolite,
That violet-tinted gem which sometime hides
In Indian hills. Azures and purples bright
Play daintily across its sparkling sides !

And, look ! the Casket bears so rich a labour
Of chiselled work, and stones, it may have been
By day the white delight, at night the neighbour
Of the soft slumbers of some Hindoo Queen.

It may be wrought—who knows ? of ivory
Taken from tooth of Raja Megh Koomar.
A famous Prince of Magadha was he,
Gentle in peace, and generous in war,

An elephant, in his last life but one,—

'Tis the Jain story—for a woodland-fire
 Brake forth, consuming trees and grass. Undone
 The forest-creatures died. Wider and higher

The red tongues raged; whereat this kingly beast

Betook himself for flight; when—from the reeds—
 A striped bush-mouse, of all things last and least,
 Leaped forth, and ran between his feet, and pleads

To Raja Megh: “Ahi! great Prince! permit

I take asylum from this dreadful flame
 Betwixt thy mighty legs!” Megh looked on it:
 “Small art thou!” quotha “yet is life the same

“Brother! for thee as me. Stay where thou art!

I never spurned aught living, nor shall now;
 Sit close and fear not; I will not depart!”

Therewith he faced the fire, wielding a bough

Of thick-leaved Sâl, to beat the heat away;

Which curled and hissed, and scorched, blistering one
 limb

And all his length of trunk, so sore—they say—

Megh died ere night; but saved the mouse. And him

In the next life the just Gods made a king.

Mark, too, your casket's milky sides, how full
Of imagery! Here's a subtle thing—

A banyan-tree, whereat, with steadfast pull,

Toils a tusked Elephant to lay it low;

And 'mongst the dropping branches two which bear
A long-tailed clinging monkey, feeding so
On the red figs, he has no eyes to fear

Those two rats, one so black, and one so white,

Which nibble at the branches: but beneath
A pit gapes, where you see the lurid light
Of snake-shapes twisting, and grim signs of death.

Shall I interpret? Life's the banyan tree;

Which Death, the elephant, in dust would lay;
And the poor foolish ape is Man; and, see!

This black rat is the Night, the white the Day,

Which ever gnaw, in turn, at life's thin branches

Whereto man clings; till, blind with sense and sin,
Fat with world's figs, down rolls he to those trenches
Dug by Death's feet, with serpents hid therein.

But here's a fairer legend carved! A balance
 Wherein they weigh a Prince against a Dove;
 An Eagle looking on! the Eagle's talons
 Bloody; the Prince's face alight with love!

Shall I interpret? Raja Sagaras
 This is; for kindly heart of large renown:
 One morning, when in full Divan he was,
 A white dove through the lattice fluttered down,

Her silver plumage pink with blood, and ruffled;
 And, following on fierce wings, an Eagle. She,
 Nigh dead with fear, her fainting pinions muffled
 In the King's breast-cloth, seeking sanctuary

Close to his heart. Then screamed the cruel bird
 "Give me my prey, just King!" But Sagaras
 Fondling the Dove, said: "Never is it heard
 A prince repelled his suppliant!" Hot as brass

Glared the great Eagle's eyes while it did cry:
 "I conjure thee by justice! She is mine!
 We drove her from the wood, my mate and I,
 We hunger! give the pigeon's meat—or thine!"

“Thou hast thy right,” answered the King, “but I
 The right to ransom; bring me scales, and weigh
 My flesh against this dove’s.” So, fearlessly
 Drew he a sword, and lopped his hand away.

The bird weighed more! More of his bleeding flesh
 Shore that kind Prince; yet still mounted the scale!
 Add what he would, heaping fresh gifts on fresh,
 The Dove proves aye the heavier! To prevail

Into the balance then himself he laid,
 Pallid and fainting, “for” quoth he, “a King
 Were liever dead, and eagle’s food, than made
 A shame through ages, doing such a thing!”

Thereat—the legend runs—the Drums of Heaven
 Beat tender music, and strange blossoms rained
 Out of the sky; and from those oceans seven,
 Which ring our Earth, came Spirits of Bliss, constrained

By such sweet deed to show themselves, and praise
 My Raja carven here: also the Dove
 Shook off her feathers, and great Uma was
 Shiva’s fair Queen, Mother of Light and Love!

And the black Eagle into Dharma turned
 The God of Justice ; and the Raja's hurts
 Were healed ; and all the hearts of people burned
 With worship ! So had Mercy her deserts. . . .

Another sculptured side ! A mango-tree
 Laden with fruit : one who a hatchet bears
 Of black hue ; one breaking a branchlet,—see !—
 Blue-visaged ; while a third, red-featured, tears

Raw mangoes down : a fourth sits in the leaves
 Eating the ripest ;—he is yellow : five
 Is this light-tinted Rishi who receives
 The fallen fruit, and passes. Shall I give

Interpretation ? 'Tis a parable
 Of mortals using life and living things ;
 A Hindoo Artist's fable ; he would tell
 By colours who is wise, and which man brings

Shame on himself and sorrow to his kind.
 Black, with vile selfishness, is he that goes,
 To hew the tree for mangoes to his mind ;
 Conquerors and criminals are such as those.

And not quite black—but blue—this egotist
 Who breaks a branch to reach some rosy fruit ;
 Such be seducers, profligates ; I wist
 Small thought have they of the sad withered shoot !

A little fairer-tinted—red—is he
 Who will not harm branchlet or trunk ; yet mounts
 Into the thickest harvest of the tree,
 Plucking what comes : and this man—yellow—
 counts

Better complexion still, who only takes
 The ripe fruits, made for eating. But the best
 Behold him in that patient saint who makes
 The fallen ones suffice ! His hues attest—

(White or wheat-coloured)—that the carver meant him
 The sweet contented soul who seeks small share
 Gratefully, and goes by : since Heaven hath sent him
 To serve and work, not feast and wanton here.

Ah ! the last panel ! Asia's secrets those,
 Cut with proud patience on the creamy tooth !
 Here you divine a form serene which shows
 Smooth perfect limbs, and glorious grace of youth ;

One side all male, and one all tender woman ;
 The right-half God, but Goddess all the left ;
 With braided hair, full bosoms, beauties human :
 Over its head a bat, and water-eft ;

Beneath, a climbing plant shoots three-fold leaves,
 With pale blue flowerets. 'Tis our Hindoo's way
 To teach how "Maya's" subtle art deceives
 By double sexes, forms of things which play

In various disguise of "He" and "She,"
 Of serpent, beast, and bird ; of moving lives,
 And lives not moving. "All is phantasy !
 There is one Being only !" this he strives

To carve upon the casket, showing us
 Ardhanarîshwara—female and male—
 Who hath both natures ; and the bat proves thus
 That mouse and bird unite, as skin and scale

Meet in the eft. The plant with triple leaf
 Ah, that's a marvel of our Indian jungle !
 Dull botanists—who flout the sweet belief
 That Dryads live, and with harsh Latin bungle

Tree use and beauty—those have never told
 Half ardently *Desmodium's* miracle!
 If you should watch its buds of blue and gold
 And light green leaflets, you would see them tell

Minute by minute the day-watches all,
 And all the hours of night, ever alert;
 One petiole rising while the others fall;
 A herb which lives and moves, and doth assert

A soul of sentience overpassing bounds
 Set for the leafy world. Have we not seen
 In sunny Singhalesian garden-grounds,
 The grasses shrink where our quick steps had been,

Modest and timid as a maid that blushes,
 But is not to be touched? Flowers, too, there be
 Which sparkle flame in opening; one that flushes
 Scarlet, at sunset only. Briefly, he—

Our Hindoo—thinks men, creatures, trees all one;
 He calls *Desmodium* a mystic name.
 But close the Casket's lid! I were undone
 If this should weary you. Now shines the flame

D

OF Dawn-stone ! rare Sandastros !—*pedra pura !*

My servants bring this gem from Yucatan :
See ! in one light 'tis ruddy like Aurora,
And in another pallid gold. . . . A man

Died, save for this ! Ah, but so long ago
You need not sigh ; yet, if you ask the story,
Believe that every jewel here below
Hath some Familiar dwelling in its glory.

How shall we question now ? Mark, on the gem,
Strange signs incised—Mexican symbols graved
By Montezuma's priests—the speech of them
Was Aztec : let the stone be three times waved,

And say, in ancient Aztec phrase, demurely,
“Sprite of the Jewel, speak ! whence springest thou ?
What is thy tale ?”—Oh, it will answer, surely !—
Behold ! a little brown-eyed damsel now

Appears, in feathered garb, and plaited tresses,
 As the soft Indians used when Cortez came!
 Listen! with low obeisance she addresses
 The mistress of the stone:

“ My wearer’s name

“ Was young Ayâni—daughter to the priest
 Of Tezicatlépotchli, God of day;
 In Anahuac, at the yearly feast,
 The fairest captive youth they chose, to lay

“ Bound, on the Blood-Rock of the Pointed Hill—
 The Teo-calli—for thus was our Law:—
 The people beat the snake-drums, and blew shrill
 Their pipes of bone, whilst the Chief-Priest did draw

“ His knife of splintered *itztli* through the flesh
 Cutting from East to West; and so did take
 The throbbing heart away, and burn it fresh
 Upon the Sun-God’s altar. But to make

“ Costlier that noble offering to Heaven,
 For twelve glad moons before the day of doom
 Honour and love to the fair boy were given;
 They built him in the Golden House a room

“ Like a God’s chamber, gay with many a thing
Of grace and ornament ; and richly laid
With cougar-skins and mats : where slaves did bring—
Each eve—baskets of grapes, and cakes new-made,

“ With cactus-wine and honey, spreading soft
His bed for love and sleep ; since always there
Tender ones waited, waving high aloft
Fans of pied feathers, that the fragrant air

“ Might kiss his brow and cheeks. And lovely gardens
Opened beyond the chamber, where there grew
All the fair fruits our southern summer hardens,
Stately great trees, and blooms of every hue.

“ And there would lie Ayâni, with her lover,
For she was noblest, and our law was this ;
That—till those twelve good moons were past and over—
The sweetest lips, the proudest breasts were his,

“ The best the Land could give. Mine was the jewel
Her throat bore when its dusky beauty spread—
In those swift hours of joy, tender and cruel,—
A pillow for his happy, fated head.

“ There would Ayâni lie, making delight
For him whose heart must smoke upon the stone :
Girding with buds of river-roses white
That breast the flint must open, flesh and bone !

“ And she would sing our ancient temple-song—
Sad and bewitching—saying Life is this :
A dream whose vague delight lasts never long ;
A swift night swallowing up brief day of bliss :

“ Or, with low kissing-cry would call away
The humming birds, that quivered at the blooms,
To nestle in her neck and hands, and lay
The honey-quest aside, trilling their plumes

“ To please the pair. This glory of my gem,
Which trembles with the colours of the Morn,
Hath no such radiance as the tints of them—
Winged jewels of their Garden. One was borne

“ On pinions of pale green, melting to black
By bronze and russet passages, its head
Alight with blazing ruby, and its back
Afire with flashing sapphire. Some word said

“ Would bring that tiny splendour, glittering,
Forth from the trumpet-blossom’s perfumed cup,
To brood amid Ayâni’s hair, each wing
Brilliantly spread, and the crest lifted up

“ A tongue of flickering flame. And one bird—dressed
All silver and soft blues, with tufts of silk
At each white flank—would fly fond to her breast,
And hang between its hills of tinted milk,

“ Darting in play his bill’s black slender curve,
Now this side and now that, as if what grew
On those hill-tops were buds enough to serve
For flowers and nectar. And another flew—

“ Whene’er Ayâni summoned—to her lip,
A little starry speck whence keen beams gleamed
Of gold and purple, in bright fellowship
With dark green gorget, and a neck that seemed

“ Plumaged from rainbows. ‘ Feed ! my Rose-ball, Feed ! ’
The girl would murmur, and the bird would poise
His bright enamelled breast, and blossomy head
Before her open laughing mouth, with noise

“ Of whirring wings ; plunging the amethyst
Of his small frontlet, and his gold-mailed neck
Into that rosy hollow—sweet, I wist,
As any rose’s heart—and feign to suck

“ Ayâni’s honey ! Yet another minion—
Corseletted all in crimson scales, and thighed
With topaz and with turquoise ; either pinion
Splashed with red gilding, and each shoulder dyed

“ Blood-purple—he would perch upon her ear,
Sit in its pearly cavern ; you had thought
A live fire-opal from Papantla there
Burgeoned and blazed ! With other cries she brought

“ Other fair woodland creatures ; lizards plated
With grey and amber armour ; mottled snakes
Pink-mouthed and sheeny ; great-eyed musk-deer, sated
With browsing flowers. The jacamar, who makes

“ A nest in reeds, left its red eggs to go
Where the girl called ; the grunting peccaries
Gazed at her through the aloes ; white as snow
The egrets clustered round her. He that lies

“ Couched in the canes, a terror of the wood,—
The clouded jaguar,—when Ayâni sung
Dropped the red fragments from his jaws, and stood
At the brake's edge to hear. Slowly unclung

“ His coils the anaconda from the limb
Where he lay knotted ; and, all spell-bound, drew
His massive freckled folds through twilights dim
Of the deep forest, hastening near to view

“ That soft-voiced woman. All along the leaves
Of the Royal lilies, where their lush growth lies
Crowning with green and red the river-waves,
The plovers raced to greet her. Butterflies—

“ Azure and silver-dappled, black and gold—
Drew towards her as they draw to some bright blossom ;
Ah, for a jewelled queen ! 'twas to behold
Ayâni with the sun-birds in her bosom,

“ And those gay fluttering fulgencies alight
On her dark hair ! She had such charm of love
'Twould stay the nursing toucan in her flight,
And fetch the hungry condor from above

“To circle nigh: the clavin—singing sweet
Beyond all warblers—and four-handed folk,
Bonnetted, furred, hook-tailed, all to her feet
Crept woingly, and took the gentle yoke,

“In joy and peace, of young Ayáni. So
Flew the delicious days, till that day came,
The last of love. ‘Honey of life! Dost know?’
The captive said: ‘to-morrow morn the flame

“‘Will eat the heart which so adores thee?’ ‘Dear!’
The Girl made answer: ‘I was set to soothe
Thy dying times, not love thee: yet, this year
Hath made our spirits one! Ayáni’s youth,

“‘Ayáni’s mirth and comfort go with thee!
Alas, the hateful stone! the cruel knife!
The awful God! But, if this offering be,
How shall I live alone, who am thy wife,

“‘Great with thy child? Look now! ’tis dark! array
thee
In my bark mantle; bind around thy waist
My belt of feathers. Fly! If any stay thee,
This jewel is the sign! Speak nothing! Haste!

“ ‘ Show them my stone, and pass ! Hide in the wood !
 Less bitter are the beasts than men who pray ! ’

Vainly he clung and kissed ; vainly withstood,
 She thrust him forth to save him. When ’twas day

“ They found him fled. Then, all the angry folk
 Cried death against Ayâni, who had cheated
 Great Tezicatlépotchli of his smoke
 Of sacrifice. But she their spite defeated ;

“ For, lying bound, she summoned from the brake,—
 By some low word her woodland creatures knew,
 And understood—a slender ribboned snake
 Which coiled, obedient, round her wrist, and drew

“ One ruby blood-drop, with right-loving tooth.—
 So did Ayâni win escape. My gem
 Hath this for story ! ”——

If thy tale be truth,
 Sprite of the Stone ! who would not pity them ?

E.

EUCLASE! and Essonite! the last and rarest—

With Evening Emerald, surnamed Peridot!
Now will fair ladies envy you, my Dearest,
For this full Jewel-Casket you have got!

Euclase! Not many an eye hath viewed the wonder!

A secret of Brazilian streams, which bring
Once in twelve moons to sight—the schist-drifts under—
The tender glories of this subtle thing.

Sometimes a honey-yellow, sometimes green

As leaves against the light, then shot with flakes
Of pale sea-blue, but all three Colours seen
As Nature wills; for the keen crystal takes

No touch of wheel. Its fragile charms forbid

A goldsmith's labour; when the Maker made
Euclase, "Let there lie, in My Rivers hid,
"One perfect thing man shall not mar!" He said.

And Essonite—styled “stone of Cinnamon”—

The garnet Greek and Tuscan used to grave
With beauty, best and sweetest under sun,

Faces of Gods, and Heroes great and brave!

Gold, fired with crimson beams, so glows this gem,

Cut to a beetle’s shape, the sacred Scarab
Of dead Egyptians. Note the signs of them

Quaint hieroglyphs! Some Æthiop or Arab

Wore this in life and death; and no man knows

His name or deeds! But your name men shall know
Reading these jewelled letters which compose

Its gentle music; for my verse will go—

Glad with the light of Love and you—to days

When better poets live, and Life,—made strong
By sheaves of our sad sowing-time—shall praise

Ladies we sang, and graces of our song.

.

Last comes my Peridot, the stone of Eve,

Tinted as evening skies are when their blue
Blends with the gold and grey, till we believe

Asphodel valleys open, and ’tis true

That bless'd spirits tread green meads in Heaven.

This is the "precious olivine" men trace
In cliffs of Nile; and sometimes it is riven
From those black massy bolts hurled out of space

Upon our Earth. Whence come they? Birds of wonder,
Flying on fearful pinions from the Vast
Wherein all swims; lighting, mid flame and thunder,
In the scorched fields. The Indian blacksmith's blast

Forges a sword therefrom of splendid water:

I pluck a jewel, Dear! for Love can bring
Gladness from grief, high hope from death and slaughter,
Light out of Darkness, good from everything!



OTHER POEMS.

OTHER POEMS.



Laila.

OH, Foolish One ! who wonderest if the eyes of lovers see
The glory of the Living God in faces blank to thee ;
If unto them the form belov'd veils more than mortal
 charms,

And Paradise stands open when "my Lady" spreads her
 arms.

The Khalîf unto Laila said : " Art thou that Maid of
 fame

For whom a wanderer in the waste the lost Majnûn became ?
By Allah ! not to me thou seem'st as fair as hath been
 told,

No Rose of all our roses ; no white pearl set in gold !

Of all the trees no cypress, of all the stars no moon ! "

" Peace, Lord," sad Laila answered, " thou art not my
 Majnûn ! "

En Westminster Abbey.

She. UNDER the marble's milk-white satin,
With cherubim, seraphim, trumpets of Fame,
And stately scrolls of imperial Latin
Blazoning proudly each deathless name ;

I think I could rest in a well-pleased slumber ;
I think my flesh would be fain of the grave
If I might be of this glorified number,
And such a tomb, such epitaphs, have !

He. Oh, easily lulled ! and comforted lightly !
If I might choose, I would have them give
'To the quick flames, burning clear and brightly,
Whatever is left of me, after I live.

Or else, in the kind great arms of the sea—
Which nothing can cumber, and nothing stain—
Lay it and leave it. So might I be
Safe back with the winds and the waters again !

She. At least confess 'twere a record splendid
To lie, like Philips, with lovely verse
Sounding the triumph of life well ended,
Tenderly wreathing the minstrel's hearse ;

Was it not grand to win such sweet riddance ?
“ Master ! peaceful hereunder recline ! ”
To be laid in earth with that gentle biddance ?
“ Till Angels wake thee with songs like thine ! ”

He. Fair is the verse ; but, I think the Master
Would rather live on a choral lip ;
Would liever some warm heart beat the faster
For musical joy and fellowship,

In anthems rolling—solemn and certain—
Or madrigals left us to play and to sing ;
Than have Angels set to draw Death's curtain,
And lauds as loud as the praise of a King.

She. Well ! tell me then, was there ever graven
A farewell softer to spirit fled
Than Franklin hears in this quiet haven
Where moor the fleets of our mighty Dead ?

Cenotaph ? Yes !—but the beautiful message !
Where is one like it ? “ Great Sailor-Soul !
Sailing now on some happier passage,
Voyaging hence to no earthly Pole ! ”

He. Nay ! I have seen what was like it, and better ;
Far away, on a Syrian hill :
Not one word ! not an Arabic letter
Marked where the dead man lay so still ;

But round his headstone, for sorrow and story,
A long black braid of tresses was tied !
Think how she loved him to give the glory
Of her hair ! Would you, Dear ! if I had died ?

Atalanta.

GREEK Atalanta! girdled high,
Gold-sandalled; great majestic Maid!
Her hair bound back with silver tie,
And in her hand th' Arcadian blade
To pierce that suitor who shall choose
Challenge her to the Race—and lose!

And—at her side—Hippomenes!
Poised on his foremost foot, with eyes
Burning to win—if Pallas please,—
That course deep-perilous whose prize
Is joy or death! Apples of gold
His trembling fingers do enfold!

Oh, girls! 'tis English, as 'tis Greek!
Life is that course: train so the soul
That, girt with health and strength, it seek
One swifter still, who touches goal
First—or, for lack of breath outdone,
Dies gladly, so such race was run!

Yet scorn not, if, before your feet
 The golden fruits of life should roll—
 Faith, worship, loving service sweet—
 To stoop and grasp them ! So the Soul
 Runs slower in the Race by these,
 But wins them, and—Hippomenes.

Life.

(From Victor Hugo.)

LET us be like a bird, one instant lighted
 Upon a twig that swings ;
 He feels it yield—but sings on, unaffrighted,
 Knowing he hath his wings !

Hadrian's Address to his Soul.

SOUL of me ! floating, and flitting, and fond !
 Thou and this body were life-mates together ;
 Wilt thou be gone now ? And whither ?
 Pallid, and naked, and cold,
 Not to laugh, or be glad, as of old !

The Depths of the Sea.

(On a picture by Mr. Burne Jones, with the motto :

—*habes quod totá mente petisti*

Infelix !)

WHICH is the one we must pity, Master ?

Who is *infelix*—the boy, or she

Drawing him down from his barque's disaster

To the pebbled floor of her silvery sea ?

With light keen laughter drawing him down ;

Gleeful to clasp him—her mariner brown—

Hedless of life-breath, which bubbles upward,

So the fair strong body her own may be.

Who was the one that longed too madly

To have the wish—and is sorry to have ?

Do you mean your sailor faced over-gladly

The toils of the bitter and treacherous wave ;

The depths which charm, the danger which pleases,

The death that tempts man's spirit, and teases ;

And now he has won it, his prize of daring,

Dragged to the cold sea-maiden's cave ?

Or was it she, the Merman's Daughter,—
 Half soft white woman, half glittering scales—
 Who, sporting by starlight upon the water,
 Saw him, and passioned—and so prevails ;
 Sent the gale, or the mountainous billow,
 To wash him down to the oozy pillow
 Where night and day, she will lull her lover,
 'Mid whispering sea-shells, and green sea-dales ?

And she is to find—poor Child of ocean,
 His mouth set fast, and his blue eyes dim ;
 And lips, and limbs, and hands *sans* motion,
 And sweet love dumb in the breast of him ;
 And her own wild heart will break to know
 Men cannot breathe in her Blue below,
 Nor mermaidens come to the Blue of his Heaven ;
 Is that your moral, my Painter grim ?

Say, rather : “ *terque quaterque felices !* ”
 Fortunate, both of them, winning their will !
 If you paint the deep grey Sea's abysses
 Dare also to plunge to the depths of Ill !
 For Peace broods under the rough waves' riot,
 And beyond dark Death is delightful quiet ;

And once to have loved is good for the Sea-girl,
And once to have died is better still!

I call them happy—yea, “three and more times,”

She hath her Boy; he hath his rest;

And to finish love and life beforetimes

For Sailor and Mermaid is—may be—best,

I think she feels, by her subtle laughter,

That to clasp him was good, whatever comes after;

And what should a weary mariner wish for

Better than sleep by Love caressed?

The Heavenly Secret.

“SOMETIMES,” sighed Lalage: “in hours of sadness,
A sudden pleasure shines upon the soul,
The heart beats quick to half-heard notes of gladness,
And from the dark mind all its clouds unroll:
How is this, Poet? You, who know things hidden,
Whence sounds that under-song of soft content?
What brings such peace, unlooked-for and unbidden?
Say, now! Oh, is it truth or accident?”

“Dear Maid!” I said, “wisely you ask a poet,
For there’s my answer, on your upper lip!
The Talmud writes: that dimple—as you show it—
Between the rosy mouth and nose’s tip,
Was stamped by God’s own hand, the day He made us,
When unto each He whispered “All goeth well!”
But pressed His finger on our lips, and laid us
Under His secret not to know—nor tell!

Adieu.

INDIA farewell ! I shall not see again
Thy shining shores, thy peoples of the Sun,
Gentle, soft-mannered, by a kind word won
To such quick kindness ! O'er the Arab main
Our flying flag streams back ; and backwards stream
My thoughts to those fair open fields I love,
City and village, maidan, jungle, grove,
The temples and the rivers ! Must it seem
Too great for one man's heart to say it holds
So many many Indian sisters dear,
So many Indian brothers ? that it folds
Lakhs of true friends in parting ? Nay ! but there
Lingers my heart, leave-taking ; and it roves
From hut to hut whispering " he knows, and loves !"
Good-bye ! Good-night ! Sweet may your slumbers be,
Gunga ! and Kaśi ! and Saráswati !

*March 5, 1886,
S.S. Siam.*

The Indian Judge.

A CLOUD was on the Judge's brow
The day we walked in Aitwar-Pêt;
I knew not then, but since I know
What held his earnest features set :

That great cause in the Suddur Court !
To-morrow judgment should be given ;
And, in my old friend's troubled thought
Conscience with prejudice had striven.

Nay, nay ! No juster Judge on bench !
But Justice in this cause of "Wheatstone's,"
Was hard to do. I could not wrench
His sombre eyes from Poona's street-stones.

Silent we threaded Môti-chouk,
Paced silent past the Dharma-sâla ;
At last, half petulant, I spoke ;
"Here is our Sanskrit School—Pat-shâla !"

“ See! listening to their grey Guru

The Brahman boys read Hindu cases ;
Justinian and the Code for you,

Manu for them ! What solemn faces

“ Range, in dark ring, around the book

Wherefrom the old Achârya preaches ! ”

He paused, and, with a wistful look,

Said : “ Might one know what Manu teaches ?

So drew we nigh the School, and paid

Due salutations ; while the Master—

Proud to be marked by Sahebs—made

The strong shlokes roll, fuller and faster :

“ *Na vismayêta tapasâ*

Vadêdishtiva cha nanritan

Na parikêrttay êt datvâ

Nartti” pyapavadêd vipran.”

“ *Namutra hi sahâyarthan*

Pita mata cha tishtatas

Na jnatir na putradâram

Tishtati dharmâ kêvalas”

All down to *kasarîrinam*

Gravely the Shastri chants the verses,
 Rocking his head ; while, after him,
 The turbaned class each line rehearses.

“What is the lesson ?” asked my friend,
 With low salaam, reply was given :
 “Manu’s Fourth Chapter—near the end—
 At shloke two hundred thirty-seven.”

Then, turning to the brightest-eyed
 Of those brown pupils round him seated,
 “Gunput,” the Shastri said, with pride,
 “If it shall please my Lords, can read it.”

We nodded ; and the Brahman lad—
 At such great charge shy, but delighted—
 In what soft English speech he had
 The Devanâgiri recited :

“Be not too proud of good deeds wrought !—
 When thou art come from prayer, speak truly !—
 Even if he wrongeth thee in aught
 Respect thy Guru ! Give alms duly ;

“But let none wist! Live, day by day,
With little and with little swelling
Thy tale of duty done—the way
The wise ant-people build their dwelling;

“Not harming any living thing:
That thou may'st have—at time of dying,—
A Hand to hold thee, and to bring
Thy footsteps safe; and, so relying,

“Pass to the farther world. For none
Save Justice leads there! Father, mother,
Will not be nigh; nor wife, nor son,
Nor friends, nor kin; nor any other

“Save only Justice! All alone
Each entereth here, and each one leaveth
This life alone; and every one
The fruit of all his deeds receiveth

“Alone—alone; bad deeds and good!
That day when kinsmen, sadly turning,
Forsake thee, like the clay or wood,
A thing committed to the burning.

“But Justice shall not quit thee then,
 If thou hast served her ; therefore never
 Cease serving ; that she hold thee, when
 The darkness falls which falls forever,

“Which hath no star, nor way to guide.
 But Justice knows the road ; the midnight
 Is noon to her. Man at her side
 Goes through the gloom safe to the hid light.

“And he who loved her more than all,
 Who purged by sorrow his offences,
 Shall shine in realms celestial
 With glory, quit of sins and senses.”

What made my friend so softly lay
 His hand on Gunput's naked shoulder
 With gentle words of praise, and say,—
 His eyes grown happier and bolder,—

“I too have been at school ! Accept
 Thanks, Guru ! for these words imparted” ?
 And when we turned away he kept
 Silence no more, but smiled, light-hearted.

And, next day, in his Indian Court,
That summing-up he did declaim us—
Straight in the teeth of what was thought—
Which made “His Honour” feared and famous.

Jeanne.

(From Victor Hugo.)

JEANNE, in the dark room, had dry bread for dinner,
Guilty of something wrong; and I—the sinner—
Crept up to see that prisoner in her cell,
And slipped—on the sly—some comfits to her. Well!
Against the laws, I own! Those, who with me
Support the order of society,
Were furious! Vainly murmured little Jeanne,
“Indeed, indeed, I never will again
Rub my nose with my thumb! I won’t make pussy
Scratch me!” they only cried, “The naughty hussy!
She knows how weak you are, and wanting sense,
And sees you only laugh at grave offence:

Government is not possible! All day
Order is troubled, influence slips away,
No rules, no regulations! nought can mend her;
You ruin everything!" Then I—the offender—
I hang my head, and say, "There's no excuse!
I know I err; I know by such abuse,
Such wrong indulgence, nations 'go to pot';
Put me upon dry bread!" "Why should we not?
We will! you merit it!" But my small maid
From her dark corner looking unafraid
With eyes divine to see, full of a sense
Of settled justice, in their innocence,
Whispered, for me to hear, "Well, if they do,
I shall bring comfits, Grandpapa, to you."

A Rajpût Nurse.

“WHOSE tomb have they builded, Vittoo! under this
tamarind tree,
With its door of the rose-veined marble, and white dome
stately to see,
Was he holy Brahman, or Yogi, or Chief of the Rajpût
line,
Whose urn rests here by the river, in the shade of the
beautiful shrine?”

“May it please you,” quoth Vittoo, salaaming, “Protector
of all the poor!
It was not for holy Brahman they carved that delicate
door;
Nor for Yogi, nor Rajpût Rana, built they this gem of
our land;
But to tell of a Rajpût woman, as long as the stones
should stand.

" Her name was Môtî, the pearl-name ; 'twas far in the
 ancient times ;
 But her moon-like face and her teeth of pearl are sung
 of still in our rhymes ;
 And because she was young, and comely, and of good
 repute, and had laid
 A babe in the arms of her husband,* the Palace-Nurse
 she was made :

" For the sweet chief-queen of the Rana in Joudhpore
 city had died,
 Leaving a motherless infant, the heir to that race of
 pride ;
 The heir of the peacock-banner, of the five-coloured flag,
 of the throne
 Which traces its record of glory from days when it ruled
 alone ;

" From times when, forth from the sunlight,† the first of
 our kings came down
 And had the earth for his footstool, and wore the stars
 for his crown,

* A Hindu father acknowledges paternity by receiving in his arms his new-born child.

† The Rajpût dynasty is said to be descended from the sun.

As all good Rajpûts have told us ; so Môtî was proud
and true,
With the Prince of the land on her bosom, and her own
brown baby too.

“And the Rajpût women will have it (I know not myself
of these things)
As the two babes lay on her lap there, her lord’s, and
the Joudhpore King’s ;
So loyal was the blood of her body, so fast the faith of
her heart,
It passed to her new-born infant, who took of her trust
its part.

“He would not suck of the breast-milk till the Prince
had drunken his fill ;
He would not sleep to the cradle-song till the Prince was
lulled and still ;
And he lay at night with his small arms clasped round
the Rana’s child,
As if those hands like the rose-leaf could shelter from
treason wild.

“ For treason was wild in the country, and villainous men
had sought
The life of the heir of the gadi,* to the Palace in secret
brought ;
With bribes to the base, and with knife-thrusts for the
faithful, they made their way
Through the line of the guards, and the gateways, to the
hall where the women lay.

“ There Môtî, the foster-mother, sate singing the children
to rest
Her baby at play on her crossed knees, and the King's
son held to her breast ;
And the dark slave-maidens round her beat low on the
cymbal's skin
Keeping the time of her soft song—when—Saheb!—
there hurried in

“ A breathless watcher, who whispered, with horror in
eyes and face :
‘ Oh ! Môtî ! men come to murder my Lord the Prince
in this place !

* The “seat” or throne.

They have bought the help of the gate-guards, or
slaughtered them unawares,
Hark! that is the noise of their tulwars,* the clatter
upon the stairs!

“For one breath she caught her baby from her lap to her
heart, and let
The King's child sink from her nipple, with lips still
clinging and wet,
Then tore from the Prince his head-cloth, and the putta
of pearls from his waist,
And bound the belt on her infant, and the cap on his
brows, in haste;

“And laid her own dear offspring, her flesh and blood,
on the floor,
With the girdle of pearls around him, and the cap that
the King's son wore;
While close to her heart, which was breaking, she folded
the Râja's joy,
And—even as the murderers lifted the purdah—she fled
with his boy.

* Indian swords.

“ But there (so they deemed) in his jewels, lay the Chota
Rana,* the Heir ;

‘ The cow with two calves has escaped us,’ cried one, ‘ it
is right and fair

She should save her own butcha ; † no matter ! the edge
of the dagger ends

This spark of Lord Raghoba’s sunlight ; stab thrice and
four times, O friends !’

“ And the Rajpût women will have it (I know not if this
can be so)

That Môti’s son in the putta and golden cap cooed low,
When the sharp blades met in his small heart, with never
one moan or wince,

But died with a babe’s light laughter, because he died
for his Prince.

“ Thereby did that Rajpût mother preserve the line of our
Kings.”

“ Oh ! Vittoo,” I said, “ but they gave her much gold and
beautiful things,

* “ Little King.”

† “ Little one.”

And garments, and land for her people, and a home in
the Palace! May be
She had grown to love that Princeling even more than
the child on her knee."

"May it please the Presence!" quoth Vittoo, "it seemeth
not so! they gave
The gold and the garments and jewels, as much as the
proudest would have;
But the same night deep in her true heart she buried a
knife, and smiled,
Saying this: 'I have saved my Rana! I must go to
suckle my child!'"

Zanouba's Song.

From the Persian :

[*Heard at a Nautch, in Bhaonagar Palace, Nov. 1885*].

“ O FACE of the tulip, and bosom
Of the jasmine, whose Cypress are you ?
Whose fate are you, cold-hearted Blossom ?—
In the Garden of Grace, where you grew,
The lily boasts no more her fragrance,
And the rose hangs her head at your feet ;
Ah ! whose is that mouth like the rose-bud,
Making honey seem no longer sweet ?

“ You pass, taking hearts ; you ensnare one
Like wine ; and your eyes dart a light
As of arrows. Whose are you, most fair one !
With brow like the crescent of night ?
Have you come to make me, too, your victim ?
So be it ! Ah, loveliest lip,
Give now to this slave who adores you
One drop from that death-cup to sip.”

The Snake and the Baby.

“In sin conceived,” you tell us, “condemned for the guilt
of birth,”

From the moment when, lads and lasses, they come to this
beautiful Earth ;

And the rose-leaf hands, and the limpid eyes, and the
blossom-mouths, learning to kiss

Mean nothing, my good Lord Bishop! which, any way,
shakes you in this?

Well, I—I believe in babies! from the dawn of a day in
spring

When, under the neems, in my garden, I saw a notable
thing,

Long ago, in my Indian garden. 'Twas a morning of
gold and grey,

And the Sun—as you never see him—had melted the
last stars away.

My Arab, before the house-door, stood stamping the
gravel to go,
All wild for our early gallop; and you heard the caw of
the crow,
And the "nine little sisters" a-twitter in the thorn-bush;
and, farther away
The coppersmith's stroke in the fig-tree, awaking the
squirrels to play.

My foot was raised to the stirrup, and the bridle gathered.
What made
Syce Gopal stare straight before him, with visage fixed
and dismayed?
What made him whisper in terror? "O Shiva, the snake!
the snake!"
I looked where Gopal was gazing, and felt my own heart
quake!

For there—in a patch of sunlight—where the path to the
well went down,
The year-old baby of Gopal, sate naked, and soft, and
brown,
His small right hand encircling a lota of brass, his left
Close-cuddling a great black cobra, slow-creeping forth
from a cleft!

We held our breaths! The serpent drew clear its
lingering tail
As we gazed; you could see its dark folds and silvery
belly trail
Tinkling the baby's bangles, and climbing his thigh and
his breast,
As it glided beneath the fingers on those cold scales
fearlessly pressed.

He was crowing—that dauntless baby!—while the lank
black Terror squeezed,
Its muzzle and throat 'twixt the small flank and arm of
the boy! Well pleased,
He was hard at play with his serpent, pretending to guard
the milk,
And stroking that grewsome comrade with palms of nut
brown silk!

Alone, untended, and helpless, he was cooing low to the
snake;
Which coiled and clung about him, even more (as it
seemed) for the sake

Of the touch of his velvety body, and the love of his
laughing eyes,
And the flowery clasp of his fingers, than to make the
milk a prize.

For, up to the boy's face mounting, we saw the cobra dip
His wicked head in the lota, and drink with him, sip for
sip ;
Whereat, with a chuckle, that baby pushed off the
serpent's head,
And—look!—the red jaws opened, and the terrible hood
was spread !

And Gopal muttered beside me “ *Sahēb, maro ! maro !* ” *
to see
The forked tongue glance at the infant's neck, and the
spectacled devilry
Of the flat crest dancing and darting all round that
innocent brow ;
Yet it struck not ; but, quietly closing its jaws and its
hood, laid now

* “Strike, sir ! strike !”

The horrible mottled murder of its mouth in the tender
clink

Of the baby's plump crossed thighlets; while peacefully
he did drink

What breakfast-milk he wanted, then held the lota down
For the snake to finish at leisure, plunged deep in it,
fang and crown.

Three times, before they parted, my Syce would have
sprung to the place,

In fury to smite the serpent; but I held him fast, for
one pace

Had been death to the boy! I knew it! and I whispered,
“Gopal, wait!

“Chooprao!* he is wiser than we are; he has never yet
learned to hate!”

Then coil by coil, the cobra unwound its glistening bands,
Sliding—all harmless and friendly—from under the baby's
hands;

Who crowed, as his comrade left him, in year-old
language to say

“Good-bye! for this morning, Serpent! come very soon
back to play!”

* Be quiet!”

So, I thought, as I mounted "Wurdah," and galloped the
Maidan thrice,
"Millennium's due to-morrow, by 'baby and cockatrice'!"
And I never can now believe it, my Lord! that we come
to this Earth
Ready-damned, with the seeds of evil sown *quite* so
thick at our birth!

From a Sikh Hymn.

"THE beautiful blue of the Sky is the Guru of Man ;
And his Father the Water white ;
And his Mother the broad-browed Earth, with her
bountiful span ;
And the sweet-bosomed Night
Is the black Nurse who lulls him to sleep, with the stars
in her ears ;
And the strong striding-Day
Is the Hamal, with glittering turban and putta, who
bears
The children to play."

A Farewell.

(From the French.)

To four-score years my years have come ;
At such an age to shuffle home
 Full time it seems to be
So now, without regret, I go,
Gaily my packing-up I do ;
 Bonsoir, la Compagnie !

When no more in this world I dwell
Where I shall live I can't quite tell ;
 Dear God ! be that with Thee !
Thou wilt ordain nothing save right,
Why should I feel then grief or fright ?
 Bonsoir, la Compagnie !

Of pleasant days I had my share ;
For love and fame no more I care ;
 Good sooth, they weary me !
A gentleman, when fit for nought,
Takes leave politely, as he ought :
 Bonsoir, la Compagnie !

A Love-Song of Henri Quatre.

COME, rosy Day !
Come quick—I pray—
I am so glad when I thee see !
Because my Fair,
Who is so dear,
Is rosy-red and white like thee.

She lives, I think
On heavenly drink
Dawn-dew, which Hebe pours for her ;
Else—when I sip
At her soft lip
How smells it of ambrosia ?

She is so fair
None can compare ;
And, oh, her slender waist divine !
Her sparkling eyes
Set in the skies
The morning star would far outshine !

Only to hear
Her voice so clear
The village gathers in the street ;
And Tityrus,
Grown one of us,
Leaves piping on his flute so sweet.

The Graces three,
Where'er she be,
Call all the Loves to flutter nigh ;
And what she'll say,—
Speak when she may,—
Is full of sense and majesty !

From the Sanskrit Anthology.

Am, God! I have not had Thee day and night
In thought, nor magnified Thy name aright,
Nor lauded Thee, nor glorified, nor laid
Upon thine altars one poor kuśa-blade!
Yet now, when I seek refuge, Lord! with Thee
I ask, and Thou wilt give all good to me!

I am of sinfulness and sorrows full!
Thou art the Mighty, Great, and Merciful!
How should we not be friends, or Thou not save
Me who bring nought to Thee Who all things gave?

Basti Singh's Wife.

(A Bihari Mill Song.)

1.

BASTI SINGH's wife, shredding betel—betel-leaf, and cloves,
and spices—

Mixed a savoury mess, and made it rich and fragrant ;
—HURJI !

Husking paddy, husking sâthi,* boiled and strained the
steaming rices,

Poured the dall and conjee on it: so, 'tis ready!—
HURJI !

2.

“Mother-in-law! beside me sitting, is it fitting † if I
carry

'To my husband's elder brother food to eat now?’—
HURJI !

* “Sixty-day rice.”

† A Hindoo wife may converse unveiled and freely with the younger brothers of her husband, but not with the elder brothers.

“ Daughter-in-law ! fold close thy sari over face and
 neck, nor tarry ;
 Bare thy hands alone in serving Basti’s brother.”—
 HURJI !

3.

Sitting down to eat, he marked her, Basti’s brother
 marked her beauty,
 Evil eyes from feet to forehead wandering, pondering,
 —HURJI !

“ Elder brother of my husband ! I have surely failed of
 duty ;
 Too much salt unto the conjee have I added ? ”—
 HURJI !

4.

“ Too much salt thou hast not added, fair wife of my
 younger brother !
 Nor in aught hast failed of duty, thou with dove’s
 eyes ! ”—HURJI !

At the dawn they beat the big drums—“ Ho ! let all the
 people gather,
 Small and great, to see the hunting of the sleek
 deer ”—HURJI !

5.

Deer they killed, and hares, and peacocks, shooting hard
with arrows sharpened,

Basti's brother pierced his brother with an arrow;—

HURJI!

“Mother-in-law, beside me seated, what calamity hath
happened?”

See! the spangle* on my forehead to the earth falls!”

—HURJI!

6.

“Daughter-in-law! say no such evil! speak no word of
ill-betiding!

Basti Singh has gone a-hunting; have thou patience!”

—HURJI!

Hark! the tramping, and the champing! all the riders
homewards riding!

Only Basti's horse returning riderless, ah!—HURJI!

7.

Look! the bright swords in each scabbard! Look! the
arrows in each quiver!

* The *tikuli*, a spot of red, white, or yellow paint placed on the forehead. It is a very bad omen to have it come off.

Only Basti's sword and quiver soaked with black
blood!—HURIJI!

At the first watch, comes in darkness to her hut-door
by the river

Basti's elder brother knocking, softly knocking:—
HURIJI!

8.

“If you be a jackal prowling, if you be a dog at pillage,
If you be the village people, get you hence now!”—
HURIJI!

“Nay, no dog or jackal am I; nor the people of the
village;
I am Basti Singh the Rajpoot; fair wife open!”—
HURIJI!

9.

“Liar! that is not my Lord's voice! Thou hast slain
him! Quick! confess it!
Where, thou liar? how, thou liar? by what tree,
now?”—HURIJI!
“Yes! I slew him in the jungle—for thy sweet love, I
profess it!
Underneath a twisted sandal lies his body!”—HURIJI!

10.

“Show me!” “Nay!” he said, “but only, Basti’s widow! if thou swearest

Thou wilt keep his bed-place for me at thy soft side”

—HURJI!

“Oh, my husband’s elder brother! if his death-place thou declarest,

This I swear, none else shall have it—show me! show me!”—HURJI!

11.

All beneath the eyes of midnight, under peepul trees which listen,

Over plain, and down the nullah, through the river,—
HURJI!

On the road with horse-hoofs dented, by the paths where blood-drops glisten,

To the twisted tree he led her: “Look! thy Husband!”—HURJI!

12.

“Oh, my Husband’s elder brother! oh, thou Slayer! oh, thou Liar!

Fetch me flame, the while I build the pile for
burning :”—HURIJI !

“ Swear, once more, none else shall have you, if I go to
fetch you fire.”

“ Yea ! I swear ! ” said Basti’s widow, building, building
—HURIJI !

13.

Hasten ! hasten ! Basti’s brother ! She hath laid him,
bold and lonely,

On the dry wood ! She hath mounted ! From her
breast-cloth,—HURIJI !

She hath drawn hid fire and set it. Haste not ! there
are ashes only

Left of Basti Singh the Rajpoot, and his true wife—
HURIJI !

But all the tears of all the eyes

Find room in Gunga’s bed :

And all the sorrow is gone to-morrow

When the scarlet flames have fed.

In Memory of S. S.,

ÆTAT. 21.

(Who was accidentally drowned in Loch Maree, Scotland, on the
29th of August, 1887.)

Too dear to die! too sweet to live, and bear
The griefs which burden all our being here!
Too precious to give up, could Love but stay
The stroke of Fate, and parting pangs delay!
Yet take her—since 'tis willed—Angels of Heav'n!
Your Sister-Angel; her so briefly given
To grace and gladden Earth. Ah, wild Scotch Lake!
We will not curse thee, for her gentle sake;
Ah! cruel Water-Nymphs! who drew her in,
We half forgive, she was so fair to win!
Ah, Rocks and Rowan-trees, who saw her die,
And could not save her! we shall, by and by,
Know the hard secret of a woe like this,
And see—clear-eyed—how Sorrow brings to Bliss.
To-day there comes no comfort! None! We wave
Weak hands towards that gloom beyond the grave;

We speed vain messages of tender thought
 To that new-vanished Spirit ; who saith naught !
 Still, she must know ! must hear ! must yearn to say
 All's well with her ; that Love and Death, always,
 Are friends ; and last pains light, and swift to heal ;
 And the Loch's winding-sheet not cold to feel !
 She speaks ! with higher life made glad and full ;
 Our ears for Angels' whispers are too dull !
 Have, then, thy early peace, Sophie ! and we—
 By this trust lightened—Love's blind agony.

Epitaph written for the Same.

DEAR Maid ! the waters, closing o'er thy head,
 Snatched thee from Earth, but opened Heaven, instead.
 Sadly we give thee back to God That gave,
 In this faith firm—that He, who walked the wave,
 Held thy Soul up, when thy sweet Body sank ;
 And led thee, loving, to the Blissful Bank.
 Pray for us, new-made Angel !—now, that we
 Sink not beneath the waves of Sorrow's Sea.

FROM THE SANSKRIT.

FROM THE SANSKRIT.



Grishma; or, The Season of Heat.

[From the *Ritu Sanhûra* of Kâlidâsa.]

WITH fierce noons beaming, moons of glory gleaming,
Full conduits streaming, where fair bathers lie ;
With sunsets splendid, when the strong Day, ended,
Melts into languor, like a lover's sigh—
So cometh Summer nigh.

And shadows black as night, laced with gold light
Where beams, flame-bright, pierce courts of calm retreat;
Wan rills which warble over glistening marble ;
Cold jewels, and red sandal, moist and sweet,
These for the time are meet

Of *Suchi* springing ; of the glad days bringing
Love-songs for singing which all hearts enthral ;
Wine-foam that hovers at the lips of lovers,
Perfumes and pleasures in the Palace-Hall :
In *Suchi* these befall.

For then, their hips loose-cinctured, bosoms tintured
 With dust of neem-spray, and with pearl-strings gay ;
 Their new-laved hair unbound, and spreading round
 Faint scents, the Palace-maids in tender play
 The ardent hearts allay

Of princely playmates. Through the painted gates
 Their feet, with lac-dye neat, and anklets ringing,
 In music trip along, echoing the song
 Of wild swans—all men's souls by subtle singing
 To Kama's service bringing :

For who, their softly-heaving breasts perceiving,
 Their white pearls—weaving with the emerald stars
 Girdles and anadems—their gold and gems
 Linked upon waist and thigh, in Love's soft snares
 Is not caught unawares ?

Their silk cloths laid aside, chôlis thrown wide
 In the warm night-tide—they their beauty cover
 With woven veil too airy to conceal
 Its dew-pearled smoothness : so, with youth clad over
 Each finds her eager lover.

And breathings tender from the fans of chanda,
 Odours that wander from those gem-bound breasts,
 Voices of stream and bird, and low notes heard
 From sitar-strings amid the song's unrests,
 Wake passion; with light jests

And side-long glances, and slow-moving dances
 Each maid enhances newly-stirred delight;
 Quick leaps the fire of love's divine desire
 So kindled in the season when the Night
 With whitest stars is dight;

Till, on the silvered terraces, the faces
 Love's slumber graces, lip to fond lip lie:
 And—all for sorrow there must come To-morrow—
 The moon, who watches them, pales in the sky,
 While the still Night doth die.

Then breaks red dawn! The whirling dust is driven
 O'er earth and heaven, until the sun-scorched plain
 A road scarce shows, for dazzling heat to those
 Who, far from home and friends, journey in pain
 Longing to rest again.

In troops returning, with muzzles dry and burning
 For cool streams yearning, herds of antelope
 Haste where the brassy sky, banked black and high,
 Gives clouded promise. There will be—they hope,
 Water beyond the Tope !

In full glare failing, his hooded terrors veiling,
 His slow coils trailing o'er the fiery dust,
 The cobra glides to nighest shade, and hides
 His head beneath the peacock's train : he must
 His direst foeman trust !

Pea-fowls forlorn, o'er-mastered and o'erborne
 By blaze of morn cower down with weary cries,
 No stroke they make to slay the gliding snake
 Who creeps for shelter underneath the eyes
 Of their spread jewelleries !

The tiger scowling—that kingiy tyrant, prowling,
 For sore thirst howling, orbs a-stare and red,
 Sees without fear the elephants pass near,
 Lolls his lank tongue and hangs his bloody head,
 His mighty forces fled.

Nor heed the elephants the tiger, plucking
Dry leaves, and sucking with their hot trunks dew,
By heat tormented still they trumpet shrill,
And, nowhere finding water, still renew
Their search—a woeful crew !

With restless snout rooting their rank food out,
Where, all about the slime, thick grasses grow,
The grey boars, grunting in dire ill-contenting,
Dig lairs to shield them from the torturing glow,
Deep—deep as they can go.

The frog, for misery of his pool, drawn dry
'Neath that flame-darting sky, and waters drained
Down to their clay—crawls croaking forth to stay
Against the black-snake's coils, where there is gained
A little shade ; and, strained

To patience by the rays which flicker and blaze
From the scorched jewel on his venomous head,
That worm whose tongue—as the blast burns along—
Licks it for coolness, all discomfited
Strikes not his new friend dead !

The pool, once showing 'mid the green leaves growing,
 Blue Lotus blowing, hath no blossoms more !
 Its fish are dead ; its fearful cranes are fled ;
 And crowding cattle all its flowery shore
 Tramp to a miry floor.

With foam-strings roping down his jowl, and dropping
 From drawn, dried lips ; horns laid aback, and eyes
 Mad with the drouth, and thirst-distracted mouth,
 Fierce-thundering from the mountain cavern flies
 The bison, in wild wise,

Questing some water-channel. Bare and scannel
 The palms droop where the crows sit in a row
 With beaks agape. The grey baboon and ape
 Climb chattering to the bush. The buffalo
 Bellows. The locusts go

Choking the wells. Far over hills and dells
 Roams the affrighted eye, beholding blasted
 The pleasant grass, the forests' leafy mass
 Withered, its glory waned, its grace exhausted,
 Its creatures wasted.

Then springs to view, blood-red and fierce of hue,
As blooms sprung new on the kusumbha-tree,
The wood-fire's tongue, fanned by the winds, and flung
Furiously forth—thorns, canes and brakes you see
 Wrapped in one agony,

By ruin riven ! The conflagration driven
In crimson levin, roars from jungle dells,
Hisses and blusters through the bamboo clusters,
Crackles across the curling reeds, compels
 All that in woodland dwells

Headlong to fly ! Dreadful those flames to espy
Coil from the cotton-tree, snakes of hot gold,
Violently break from root and trunk to take
The seething leaves and boughs in deadly hold ;
 Then passing, to enfold

New plunder : beasts and birds, a sight of wonder,
Through the smoke thunder—all their enmity
Lain quite aside ; seeking the river wide
Which flows by sandy flats ; in company
 As friends, they madly flee !

But thee, my Best-Belovéd ! may *Suchi* visit fair
With songs of secret waters cooling the quiet air ;
Under blue beds of lotus-buds, and pátalas which shed
Beauty and balm, while Moon-time weaves over thy
 happy head
Its silvery veil. So nights and days of Summer glide
 for thee
Amid the Pleasure-palaces, with love and melody !

A Queen's Revenge.

From the Virâta Parva of the Mahâbhârata.

[This indubitably genuine portion of the great Hindoo Epic possesses special interest by reason of its spirited narrative, and also of the light which it casts upon ancient Indian life and manners. The five Pandu Princes, with their Queen-Consort, Draupadi, have quitted the Forest, in which they had passed twelve years of exile, to dwell in disguise at the court of King Virâta of the Matsyas. The subjoined version follows closely the Sanskrit text, but omits several detached passages and lines, for the sake of condensation.]

SPAKE Janmejaya : " I am fain to hear
 How fared my lordly forefathers disguised
 In King Virâta's city. Did they 'scape
 Duryôdhana, and undiscovered dwell?
 Also, thou Brahmana ! Queen Draupadi—
 Stricken with so much ill, so true to vows,
 Dear to all Gods, delightful,—prospered she ? "

Quoth Vaisampâyana : " Hear, Chief of Men !
 How thy proud forefathers sojourned unmarked,
 In King Virâta's town. That son of Heaven,
 Prince Yudhishthira, of the righteous soul,

Summoned his brothers, and spake thus to them :
 “ Twelve rain-times have we spent banished from home,
 The thirteenth—hard to pass, is come ! Choose now
 Some place for us—Arjuna, Kunti’s son !—
 Where we may dwell, unknown by enemies.”

Arjuna answered : “ Dharma’s help will keep
 Our ways concealed, thou King of men ! But I
 Will tell thee of fair spots, pleasant and good,
 Take which thou may’st. Round our forbidden realm
 Stretch Chedi, and Panchâla ; Matsya,
 Pattachahara, Duśarna, Surasen,
 Naorashtra, Salva, Malla, Avanti,
 Yugandhara, Surashtra, and the plains
 Of Kuntirashtra. Which, then, choolest thou
 Prince of all Princes ! for this troublous year ? ”

And Yudhisthira said : “ Oh, mighty-armed !
 Thou speakest sooth ; it will be as He wills
 The Lord of Justice. Let us seek forthwith
 One of those lands, quiet, auspicious, fair,
 And trustful sojourn there. Matsya’s Chief,
 The old Virâta hath a virtuous name ;
 Kindly and strong he is ; dear to all men ;

And loveth furthermore our Pandavas.
 Let us o'ertide this year in Matsya
 With King Virâta. Say then, Kuru Lords!
 In what guise think ye to present yourselves
 For service at the Court?"

Answered Arjun :

"Speak first, thou First of men! To what low task
 Can'st thou bow down? Lofty, and true, and mild,
 How wilt thou face the griefs which threaten thee?
 How bear such burden of indignities?"

But Yudhisthira gave reply : "Hear now,
 What I will do at King Virâta's Court,
 Right lordly brothers! giving forth myself
 A Brahman, known as Kanka, skilled in dice,
 Cunning to play at games, I shall become
 The King's attendant: I shall deftly move
 Men cut in tusk of elephant, and stainted
 Blue, yellow, white and red, on chequered cloths,
 By cast of double black and scarlet dice,
 Beguiling royal hours. Nor so employed,
 Will the King know me. But if he should ask
 'Whence and what art thou?' I shall answer thus,

‘I was Prince Yudhisthira’s closest friend.’
 So in Virâta, purpose I to live ;
 And thou, my Bhima ! in what office thou ? ”

Quoth Bhima : “ As a Cook will I appear
 At King Virâta’s Court. My name shall be
 Vallava : I am skilled in kitchen craft ;
 I will dress dishes, Prince ! as none before
 Have dieted this Lord. Great loads of wood
 My brawny back shall carry, him to serve ;
 And, seeing my tireless strength the palace-folk
 Will entertain me friendly, and my hand
 Will be set over all the meats and drinks.
 Also, if it be ordered that I fight
 Fierce bulls and fiery elephants, these arms
 Shall vanquish them ; and if they match with me
 Wrestlers and boxers I shall meet them all
 And lay them low, to make Virâta sport ;
 Yet so as not to slay—if that may be.
 Further, if any ask, ‘ Whence comest thou ? ’
 Or ‘ Who art thou ? ’ I shall this answer give :
 ‘ Of late I was the wrestler and the cook
 To Yudhisthira.’ Thus I purpose, Prince ! ”

Then Yudhisthira said: "And, what shall be
 The office of our Kuru Lord, our pride;
 The long-armed, fearless, firm, unconquerable,
 Kunti's dear son, whom once Agni himself
 Encountered, when he came, as Brahmana,
 To burn Khândava wood? What humble chare
 Will Arjun take, foremost of warriors?
 How stands thy mind herein, great Brother! say,
 Himâvat of all Hills! Ocean 'mid lakes!
 Sakra of Gods! of Vâsus flaming Fire!
 In the woods Tiger! in the skies Garûd!"

Replied Arjun: "Excellent Prince, my mind
 Is to declare myself a Shandaka,
 An Eunuch. True, I know it will be hard
 To hide the string-marks here; but I shall wear
 Bangles upon my arms; rings in my ears;
 Shell-circlets on my wrists, and twine my locks
 Into a hanging braid. Thus shall I seem
 A sexless thing; by name Vrihannalâ;
 And living so, as Shanda, I shall charm
 The King and palace-inmates with my arts,
 Teaching his women how to sing, and dance
 Delicate measures; and delightful airs

To play them on the various instruments.
 Also the ways of courts I shall recount,
 And lover's tricks, making much pleasantry,
 Myself, meanwhile, dissembling under these.
 And, Bhârata! if the King think to ask
 I'll say: 'I lived Draupadi's drum-beater
 In Yudhisthira's house.' So, keeping close
 As fire is hid by ashes, I shall pass
 Good days, dear Prince! at King Virâta's Court."

Then Yudhisthira asked: "My Nakula!—
 Handsome, and gifted with all grace, and born
 For lofty life and ease,—what menial toil
 Will thou sustain in the King's vassalry?"

Nakula made answer: "Brother! I will be
 Virâta's horse-keeper, named Granthika,
 I know that work: I have an art to train
 The untaught colts, breaking and backing them,
 For horses unto me, as unto thee,
 Were ever dear, Excellent Chief! And when
 Men question in Virâta's land, I'll say:
 'I kept the horses of Prince Yudhisthir!'
 Thus shall I dwell at peace, friendly with all,
 And none will know that I am Nakula!"

Next Yudhisthira said : "Thou, Sahadev !
How wilt thou bear thyself before the King ?
In what way wilt thou pass these days, disguised ?"

Sahadev made reply : "I will become
A herdsman of his cattle, skilled to milk,
And fold, and tell the kine. This task I'll take
As Tantripal the Cowherd. Banish doubt,
Prince ! from thy mind. Ever, in days gone by
I fared with oxen, and I know them well,
Their ways and natures, all their lucky marks,
And which is good or bad, and how to choose
Bulls of right shape and colour, bulls of blood
Whose very sniff makes barren heifers breed.
Brother ! that work I know, and I shall live
Unrecognised, and favoured by the King."

Anew spake Yudhisthira : "Still remains
This our dear Queen, dearer than realm or life ;
So to be cherished as a mother is,
Or elder-sister. Yet what knoweth she
Of any woman's labour ; what safe place
Can Draupadi—can gentle Krishnâ find ?
Tender and youthful, and a high Princess,

Softly her years have flowed hereto, as soft
 As she is pure and faithful. Now, alas !
 How wilt thou dwell, dear Draupadi ! whose life
 Was glad with garlands, fragrant with fine airs,
 Dainty with gems and flowers, and golden cloths ? ”

Draupadi answered : “ Nay ! there go in towns
 The women called Sairindhri, waiting-girls,
 Who enter household service—elsewhere shunned.
 I will give forth I am Sairindhri, Prince !
 Skilled to dress hair ; and I shall say I dwelled
 Draupadi’s waiting woman in past days
 At Yudhishthira’s Palace. Thus concealed
 Safe shall I serve the well-reputed Queen
 Sudeshnâ. She will favour me, be sure !
 Have ye no care for me ! ”

And the Prince said,
 “ Well hast thou spoken. Yet herein, dear Queen,
 Bethink thee, always, of thy line and house !
 Guarded and vowed, hereto, thou knowest not wrong,
 Therefore, so bear thyself that evil eyes
 May take no profit, if they turn on thee.”

And Vaisampâyana went on :—These Five
 Buckling their swords, and binding round their arms
 String-guards of lizard-skin, with quivers charged,
 Put forth, setting their faces for the shores
 Of the Kalindi stream. Heretofore lodged
 In trackless brakes, on pathless mountain-peaks,
 Now was their forest sojourn finished ; now
 The hope drew nigh to win their lands again.
 So to the southern bank they came, each chief
 Lusty with woodland-life and hunter's fare ;
 So passed they Yakilloma, Surasén ;
 And left behind Panchâla to the right,
 Daśarna to the left ; and quitting then
 The jungle country, entered Matsya,
 Sworded and bearded, wayworn, wearing guise
 Of stalwart woodmen.

Reaching trodden ground
 Draupadi spake : “ Look ! there be footpaths here,
 And fields fenced in : yet distant seems the town
 Of King Virâta. Halt we now till dawn ;
 Great is my weariness ! ”

Quoth Yūdhishthir :

“ Arjuna ! Best of Bowmen ! take her up !

Carry sweet Krishnâ! Where the thickets cease
We see Virâta's city."

Then Arjun,
With thews as of bull elephant, took up
Sweet Draupadi; and bore her 'till they saw
The far town-walls. Hereupon Kuntî's son
Spake, saying: "In what place shall we conceal
Our weapons ere we enter? Bearing them
Our mien must fright the townsmen: nay, no doubt,
Gandîva, this prodigious bow, is known;
But if we be discovered—even one—
Then stand we pledged to tarry twelve years more
Within the forest!"

And Arjuna said:
"Hard by yon burning-ground, below that crag
Rising so steep to climb—a Sâmi-tree
Spreads its wide branches. None will note, meseems,
If we should hide our arms on't. See! it grows
Close to the death-yard, in a dreary waste
Haunted by wolves and snakes. Let us conceal
Our weapons so; and afterwards pass free
Into the city."

This agreed, Arjun—

Thither repairing with the princely band—
Slipped from its notch Gandîva's string—that string
Which, drawn in war, sang with a thunderous song,
Destroying hosts, subduing with swift shafts
Nagas, and Gods, and men and provinces ;
And Yudhisthira slacked th' unfailing cord
Of that dread bow which routed hostile ranks
At Kurukshetra. Bhima next unstrung
The weapon that Panchâla's throne o'erthrew—
Which, singly fighting, broke a host of foes,
Resounding like the roaring of a storm
When mountains cleave—awful to enemies.
Uncorded too his bow fair Nakula,
The comely light-hued Lord named for his grace,
Soft spoken, mild, yet fearful in the field,
Nakula those notched horns loosed, which theretofore
Conquered the west. And the twin Sahadev
Freed his, which won the countries of the South.
Then, with their bows, laid they aside their swords :
Long, glittering ; and their arrows sharp as knives,
And jewelled quivers. Nakula, climbing up,
Bestowed all these in strong and hollow forks
Safe from the rain. Also the heroes hung

A body in the boughs ; “ for so,” said they,
 “ The people, smelling winds of death, and seeing
 The corpse, will cry : ‘ Avoid yon Sâmi-tree ! ’ ”

But certain cattle-herders—passing—asked
 “ Why hang ye thus a corpse upon the tree ? ”
 Answered the Pandavas : “ Our mother ’tis :
 Nine score years old at death ! We hang her there
 Because it is the custom of our race ! ”

So did those Five draw nigh the City-Gates !

But Yudhisthira—ere he reached the walls
 Entering that pleasant city—silently
 Lifted his heart to call on Durga’s help,
 Queen Durga of three worlds, Giver of good,
 Enhancer of the household, Kansa’s dread,
 Destroyer of the Demons, in bright wreaths
 Ever arrayed, ever in rich robes dressed ;
 The Goddess with the buckler and the blade,
 Who ransoms those that love her, though they be
 Sunk in their sins, as is a cow in mire—
 Protectress strong, and succourer of men,
 Delivering them from evil. So, that Prince

For him, and for his Five invoking her,
Thus named her holy names in whispered hymn :

“Glory to Thee ! Durga of beauteous brow !
The Many-faced and Many-handed ! Thou
That hast the dark limbs and deep bosoms ! Now
Listen to us, and aid !

Goddess ! whose anklets shine with lightnings thrown
From burning blue of dazzling sapphire-stone,
And dancing green of emerald. Devi known
As Everlasting Maid !

“Thou, who dost bear the cup and lily flower,
The bell, the noose, the bow, the disc of power,
Thy never-failing weapons. In this hour
Be present, Virgin Queen !

Thou with the shell-shaped ears—open to prayer—
Where swing the glittering rings ! Thou who dost wear
The diadem of glory, and long hair
Bound in a braid of sheen !

“O Moon-eyed ! with the garment rimmed by snakes
Whose skin enamelled dappled brilliance makes—

“ Thus I, a Prince without his kingdom, bow,
 Claiming thy aid and favour, Goddess! now;
 Laying—oh, Lotus-eyed—a humbled brow

Before Thee—in the dust:

As Thou art Durga—to Thy votaries kind,
 Be true to those that keep a faithful mind:
 Let us to-day Thy grace and favour find

Who in Thee put our trust!”

Praised so by Pandu's son, Durga appeared
 And spake: “ Behold me, long-armed Prince! my grace
 Is granted thee! Thou wilt o'ercome! Thy foes
 Shall fail before thee, and these Realms be thine,
 And all thy paths go thornless—yea, and now
 They shall not know thee 'midst these Matsyas,
 Because thou didst invoke me, worshipping me!”

Therewith she vanished from his wondering eyes.

Then, tying in his cloth the golden dice
 Set with blue numbers, and concealing them
 Under his arm-pit, Yudhishthira passed
 Into Virâta's Gate: whom the old King
 Witnessed approaching, like a cloud-wrapped moon
 Cleaving the sky; and to his counsellors

Spake : " Seek ye who this is, noble of port,
 Pacing so proudly, royal—having none
 To herald him, no slave, no chariot—
 And yet the air of Indra ! . Fearlessly
 He wendeth, like an elephant in rut
 Trampling the lotuses."

Thereat the Prince

Standing before Virâta, of himself
 Thus answered : " Know me, King ! a Brahmana,
 Who, lacking means to live, craves it of thee ;
 Thy service would I take !"

Well pleased that Lord

Replied : " We welcome thee ! have what thou seek'st.
 But say whence comest thou ? what is thy name ?
 Thy family ? and what skill vauntest thou ?" .

" Kanka I am ; skilled in the play of dice,"
 The Prince said : " born in the Vaiyaghra house,
 A friend of Yudhisthira in old days !"

At this Virâta spake : " Be my will heard !
 Where I am master thou art man : thy friends

Are mine; and my foes thine. Here shalt thou find
 Glad entertainment, with full meat and drink,
 And all my doors shall open stand for thee!"

So Yudhishthira entered in the Court.

Came presently another towards the King;
 Lion-like—vast of bone—whose right hand held
 A cooking-bowl, his left an unsheathed sword
 Of stainless sheen. And seeing him draw near
 The Matsya king spake unto those around:
 "Whence is this mighty man, this Bull of men,
 Broad-naped, and comely, like to Surya—
 Like to Purandara's great self! Learn ye!"
 But Bhima, close approaching, with fair words
 Addressed Virâta, saying, "Lord of Lords!
 I am a cook, named Vallava, deep-taught
 In seasoning curious dishes, and I seek
 Thy service!"

"Thou a Cook!" Virâta cried,
 "Who hast the bearing of the Thousand-Eyed!
 And strength majestic, like a king uncrowned?"

"Yea, Lord! a Cook," quoth Bhima, "and of old

Prince Yudhisthira praised the meats I dressed !
 Moreover, I can wrestle, Chief of Earth !
 And show thee sport, fighting with elephants
 Or lions, since no man hath thews like mine."

Then said the King: " Be it as thou dost ask !
 I make thee Master of my kitchen-gear ! "

So entered Bhima in Virâta's Court.

Next, through the city-gates stepped Draupadi,
 Her long black glossy hair, braided and tied,
 Rolled on the right side of her neck, lay hid
 Beneath a cloth, and the Queen's cloth was dark,
 Costly, but frayed. The deer-eyed Draupadi—
 Bright-smiling Draupadi—paced here and there—
 Dressed as Sairindhri be, mournful of mien :
 Whom, so beholding, men and women stayed,
 Enquiring, " Who art thou—what seekest thou ? "
 Whereto she said: " A king's Sairindhri I,
 Seeking such service as may find me food ! "
 But, looking on her beauty and her pride,
 None might believe.

Presently, it befell

The Queen Sudeshnâ from her Palace roof
 Spied the fair Lady thus forlorn and wrapped
 In one poor cloth ; and—calling—questioned her,
 Saying, “ Who art thou, and what seekest thou,
 Beautiful stranger ? ” Answered Draupadi :
 “ A king’s Sairindhri I, who service ask ! ”
 “ But,” quoth Sudeshnâ : “ can it be such grace
 Adorns a serving-maid ? thou rather seem’st
 Mistress of many servants ! Anklets trim !
 Limbs nobly moulded ! feet, hands, body formed
 In fairest wise ! Thy palms and soles dyed red
 With mehndi, and thy speech sweet as swan’s note !
 And lustrous silken hair ! and shapely breasts,
 Long neck, sloped shoulders, graceful globing hips !
 Nay ! like a Kashmir mare with all good marks
 Thou hast sure signs of blood—eye-lashes curved !
 Lips like red buds—waist taper, soft throat lined
 As is a conch shell—veins scarce seen—a face
 Like the full moon—eyes cut like lotus-leaves,
 And thou thyself fragrant as lotus is !
 Tell me in truth—art thou some Goddess hid—
 Yakhshi, or Gandharvi, or Apsarâ—
 A Nâga Princess, or a Kinnari—
 Rohîni’s self, perchance ! which one of these ? ”

Spake Draupadi : “ None of all these am I,
 No Goddess, Gandharvi, or Rakhshasi ;
 But only a Sairindhri girl, who knows
 To comb and braid the hair, pestle sweet gums
 For scents and unguents, and fair garlands weave
 Of lilies blue or red and champak blooms.
 Of old Queen Satyanâmi I did serve,
 And Draupadi, wife of the Pandavas :
Malîni she would call me—‘ wreath maker.’
 Now roam I, having need of food and home,
 And where I find them will I gladly bide ! ”

Sudeshnâ said, “ Thou should’st live nearest me,
 Fair wanderer ! saving that I fear thy grace
 Would draw the King’s heart wholly after thee !
 See how my women eye thee as thou goest !—
 What would men do ? I think our Palace trees
 Wave worship as thou passest ! Surely then,
 Too faultless girl, Virâta’s mind will turn
 Away from me, and wholly unto thee !
 Ah ! eyes so large and lustrous ! him they woo
 Must helplessly take fire ! If I, the Queen,
 Did house thee, should I not destroy myself,

As when the foolish crab conceiving dies,
Or one who climbs a tree falls headlong thence?"

Draupadi answered: "Noble Lady! none
Will do me wrong, or thee! My spouses five
Are Gandharvas, Heav'n's sons. Their unseen strength
Always protects me; he, who sought my love
Dishonestly, would perish that same day;
Fear nothing from my beauty, gracious Queen!"

Sudeshnâ spake: "Bright one! if this be true
I take thee to my household, promising
Thou shalt not wash another's feet, nor eat
The leavings of another."

So she passed
Into the Palace, and none knew her name.

Then Sahadev, habited like to those
Who tend the cattle, speaking as such speak,
Came to the cow-pens of the King. Him, too,
Wondering to see such stature and such strength,
Virâta summoned, questioning. The Prince,
With deep voice, thus replied: "A Vaisya I,
Arishtanêmi named; a cowherd once

In service of the Pandavas ; but now
 I wist not where they roam, those Lion Lords ;
 Yet service must I find, and if thou wilt,
 Great King, with thee !”

“Thou hast no cowherd’s air,”

Virâta said ; “a ruler might’st thou be
 Of Ocean-girdled earth ; a Harvester
 Of foes on the red battle-field. Speak sooth !
 From whose land comest thou ? What followest thou ?
 What office dost thou seek, and for what gage ?”

Quoth Sahadev : “Prince Yudhisthira owned
 Lakhs of fair kine, and I was Cow-master.
 I knew the breed and points of all which grazed
 Within ten yôjanas. The Prince himself
 Would praise my craft, since none was skilfuller
 To match the cows and bulls, and multiply
 The herds, and keep murrain and plague away.
 I know which beasts bear the auspicious marks,
 Which lordly sires, almost by sight and smell
 Will make the barren heifers fall with calf.”

Virâta answered : “Henceforth shalt thou be

Our Cowherd. All my hundred thousand kine
I put into thy charge."

So Sahadev

Entered the Royal household, and none knew.

Next day another stalwart stranger strode
Within the Gates; comely to view and strong,
But decked in female ornaments. He wore
Long ear-rings, and shell armlets laid with gold,
His dark hair flowing down his neck. Thus hid
Virâta spied Arjun, and bade enquire
"Whence is that man?" and when he nearer drew
Spake this: "Art thou an Eunuch?—thou so limbed
Like to a bull of elephants, thou framed
To ride on war-cars, wielding bow and spear?"

Arjuna said: "An Eunuch am I, King!
Ask not to such sad state how I did fall.
I sing and dance, and play the bansuli,
Vina and drum. Make me thy slave to teach
Sweet music to the women in thy house.
I am Vrihannala, the sexless one,
Daughter of no man, and of no man son!"

And when the King was made content, he sent
 That Pandu Prince—in women's garb disguised,
 Playing his pipe, and singing dancing-songs—
 To be a teacher of the Women.

So

Arjuna entered, unto no one known.

Last was there seen, fast pacing to the Gate
 Another Pandu Lord, like the gold Sun
 From clouds emerging. Drawing nigh, his gaze
 Marked heedfully the horses. Noting this
 The Matsya Chief spake to his courtiers :
 " I marvel whence he comes, that goodly man
 Who eyes our steeds so steadfastly ; go ye !
 Bid him approach, he wears a warlike air ! "

Therewith was Nakula led anigh ; and said :
 " Victory, great King, to thee, with health and
 peace !

I am a horse-tamer whom Lords have praised
 In times gone by ; new service now I seek ;
 Make me thy stable-keeper."

“I were fain,”

The King replied; “but what skill boastest thou?
Whence wendest thou to us, how art thou called?”

The Prince said: “*Śatrukarshan!* Harvester
Of slaughtered foes! I served great *Yudhisthir*,
The eldest of our *Pandavas*. I kept
His stables; for I know the hearts of steeds
To break colts in, and cure the faults of them;
To bleed and fire and physic them; to nurse
Their strength and speed, and even the wildest mares
To gentle all. My name is *Granthika*.”

Virāta said: “I take thee; *Granthika!*
Have charge of all my horses.”

Thus he, too,
Passed into service of the Court unknown.

[The next section relates how the disguised Princes spent their time in King *Virāta*'s Court; secretly assisting each other, “as much hidden as if once more in the womb.” *Yudhisthira*, by dice-playing, keeps the courtiers amused, and “sitting like birds tied on a stick;” *Arjuna*

provides the Five with food and clothes; Sahadev with milk and curds; Nakula with money, gained by horse-breaking; Bhima, who distinguishes himself greatly at wrestling and fighting, brings credit on his kinsmen; and all watch anxiously over the safety of Draupadi, who, during ten months, lives in the Palace, well-treated by Queen Sudeshnâ, but distressed at the menial condition of the Princes, and because of her separation from them. Towards the close of this year of concealment a terrible danger threatens the Pandu Queen, which is narrated as follows :]

It fell at the year's end, that Kichaka,
 The Captain of the armies of the King,
 Cast eyes on Draupadi; and—seeing her
 Fair as an Apsarâ, pacing with gait
 Of Goddess, heavenly-sweet—burned for her love,
 Smitten by Kama's shaft. Then to the Queen,
 His sister, spake he: "Never until now,
 Marked I this slave; but now she maddens me
 With that dark face, as new wine maddens men!
 Who is she? and whence sprang she? and who owns
 This Pearl of Shes? I am become her thrall:
 Sick unto death I am for her, and she
 My only medicine! Thy waiting wench—

If she be thine—was never born to serve!
 Divine she seems, and fitter to command
 Kingdoms and kings! Sister, give me the girl!
 She shall be Mistress in my Palace, decked
 With gold and gems, royally lodged and fed,
 Shall ride on elephants!”

Virâta's wife

Nothing gainsaying, Kichaka sought soon
 The Kuru Queen, and so accosted her
 As might some fawning jackal in the woods
 Accost a lioness. “Celestial one!
 Whose, and who art thou? Lovely, winsome face!
 Whence didst thou shine upon us? Tell me! Sure
 Never were seen such charms, never beheld
 Such countenance, bright as the moon at full;
 Such brows like bows, such eyes like lotus-leaves,
 Such limbs, such hips, such feet, such faultless form!
 Art thou great Lakhshmi of the Lilies, Sweet?
 Or Rati, Kama's Queen; or Hrî, or Sri;
 Kirti, or Kanti, Fairest? Thou with breasts
 So deep, so round, so sister-like, so close,
 Worthy to bind with gold! Ah, lotus buds!
 Those are as barbs of Kama, piercing me!

Thy waist, a span to clasp—thy smooth soft flesh
 Dimpled with folds—thy sides rounded and dark
 As river-banks—each loveliness in turn
 Consumeth me with fire of love and hope
 Like a wood burning! Dear one, quench this flame!
 Be the kind cloud, laden with rain, which cools!
 Heal where thy night-black eyes have hurt so deep!
 Restore me, for thou mayest! Dwell no more
 In misery ill-befitting; wealth is thine,
 And ease and joy, if thou dost deign to take,
 With luxury of wine-cups, garlands, robes.
 See! I will put away those wives I have,
 For thy sweet sake: they shall be slaves to thee;
 And I will be thy slave—thy faithfullest—
 Ever obeying every little word
 Those soft lips speak!”

Draupadi answered: “Shame

Forbids thee, Senapati! to desire
 A serving-maid of low degree, a slave
 Who dresses hair. Moreover, be this known,
 I am a wedded woman—so, 'tis sin!
 And thou dost turn thy heart towards infamies!
 If thou beest great, thou owest to thy state

Good deeds, and noble life : but sinful men—
Blind by desire—win woe, and dire disgrace.”

Then Kichaka, by those high words unmoved,
O'ermastered, reckless, lost—even while he knew
Fatal his fault and everywise condemned—
Spake insolent : “ Ill it beseemeth thee,
Fair though thou art, and with a face like Heaven,
To slight me, who am fall'n to be thy thrall !
Night-eyed Enchantress ! if thou scornest one
So gently spoken, thou wilt grieve for it !
Know, Damsel with the brows ! this kingdom's head
Is Kichaka, not old Virâta :
Hold up the land ! 'tis I am Lord and Chief,
With none to mate my strength, my will, my wealth ;
Nor any better-favoured ! Art thou mad,
Proffered full share of all my luxury,
To cling to servitude ? Take rather, girl,
Humbly this love I give, and have with me
What women seek—else shrewdly shalt thou fare ! ”

Thus arrogantly wooed, the proud Princess
Answered, indignant : “ Sutaputra ! Shame !
Stay thy fool's tongue forthwith—if life be dear !
Five Gandharvas there be who watch o'er me :

Thou canst not have me—they will slay thee! Pause!
 Tread not a path hard to be trod, a path
 Which brings thee to thy end. Thou guilty Lord!
 Thou art a child, standing on the sea's brink,
 Who thinks to cross, and dips one foolish foot:
 Yet could'st thou cross, or could'st thou soar in air,
 Or creep into the deepest underworld,
 Thou would'st not so escape the wrath of those
 Who God-like guard me! Why, then, Kichaka,
 Solicit me, like the sick man that prays
 For night to come, when night must make him die?
 Wherefore desire me, high beyond thy reach
 As the moon is for which an infant's hands
 Stretch from his mother's lap!* Thou seekest death!
 Hide where thou wilt, lost art thou, Kichaka,
 Except sense serves thee yet to save thyself."

Kichaka, thus denied, with longings wild,
 Hastes to Sudeshnâ, crying: "Sister mine,
 Contrive that thy Sairindhri come to me:
 Find me some way to win this sweet-voiced wench—
 Find, or I die, Sudeshnâ!"

* Notable is the antiquity of this phrase! The original runs:
 "Kîm maturankê sayito yathu Sîśuschandran jighrikshuriva manyase
 hi mân."

So the Queen,
 Pitying his passion, said: "Look now, provide
 Cakes and flower-wine for me against the feast,
 And I will send my woman to thy house,
 Bidding her fetch the wine. Then, being there,
 Alone, quiet, unseen—if thou may'st win,
 Soothe her, and win her. Brother, she is thine."

Then Kichaka strained wine, brewed rich and strong
 For royal cups, and set his deffest cooks
 To dress rare meats and sweets: which being done,
 Sudeshnâ spake: "Arise, Sairindhri! run,
 I am athirst! Lord Kichaka hath wine:
 Go to his house, and bring me of his wine."

Quoth Draupadi: "O Queen, I may not go!
 Thou knowest that he is shameless! Noble Queen,
 I will not be a common woman here,
 False to my Lords. Keep thou in mind, dear Queen,
 All thou did'st promise. This most wicked man,
 Mad with his wish for me, will, seeing me,
 Attempt foul wrong. Command me not to go!
 Thou hast, good Majesty, full many a maid:
 Bid one of these fetch wine!"

Sudeshnâ said :

“ Surely he will not harm thee, sent by me ! ”
 And therewith in her hands the patra laid,
 Golden, with lid of gold, which Draupadi
 Trembling and weeping took, and as she went
 She prayed this prayer : “ Since I am innocent
 Of any wifely sin, let innocence
 Protect me now, and shield from Kichaka.”
 Thus spake she, bending low to Surya :
 Whereon the God a Rakshasa sent down
 To guard her.

But when Kichaka beheld
 Draupadi coming, like a frightened deer,
 Up sprang he, joyous as the traveller
 Who sees the boat will bear him o'er the stream.

“ Oh thou with glossy braided locks ! ” he cried,
 “ Welcome, thrice welcome ! Truly this long night
 Hath brought a blissful day, since thou art here
 To live the Mistress of my House. Smile now !
 Say thou wilt pleasure me ; and bid me bring
 Bangles and chains of gold, with golden rings
 Fair-wrought and wonderful, rubies and pearls,

And rich gilt cloths and skins of deer. See here,
 How soft thy couch will be! Sit by me, Dear,
 And drink of honey-wine, and——”

Draupadi

Brake in, impatient: “’Tis the Queen hath sent.
 She bade me ask for wine: she is athirst;
 Speedily give, and let me go!”

At this

Says Kichaka: “My Lotus! some one else
 Shall carry to the Queen!” therewith he grasped
 Draupadi’s arm, but, feeling that vile touch
 The Princess cried aloud: “As never once
 Swerved I from wedded duty, ev’n in thought,
 So by my truth of heart ’scape I thee now;
 And I shall live to see thee, daring wretch,
 Roll in the dust, a carcase.”

Hearing that,

Furious he seized her cloth and strove to hold,
 But bursting from his hands, scornful, incensed,
 Not brooking such intolerable wrong,
 The angry Lady—breathing hard and quick—

Struck him and felled him, like a root-cut tree.
Then, while he sprawled, she turned and ran at speed
Straight for the Hall where King Virâta sate
With Yudhisthira, Bhima, and the Court.
But, flying thus, that guilty Lord enraged
Rose, followed her, and in the full Divan
Caught her long hair, and dragged her down, and spurned
Her body with his foot, in the King's sight,
In sight of Bhima and of Yudhisthir.

With leaping hearts those Pandu Princes there
Saw the foul deed ; and Bhima gnashed his teeth
Raging to kill, and knit his angry brows :
Sweat sprang on him, flame sparkled from his eyes,
With wrath he quaked, his hands covered his mouth,
He would have started forth and slain that Lord.
But Yudhisthira, wiser, squeezed his thumbs
Commanding peace, lest all be known ; and when
Like elephant in must Bhima glared hard,
The elder Prince spake masterful, " Dost seek
Trees to uproot for fuel, burly Cook !
Go find and fell them out of doors, not here !"
So Bhima choked his rage ; but Draupadi
With shame and anger wild—yet loath to break

Their secret—standing at the entrance-place,
Cried loud, in tears: “Lords, ye have seen to-day
Spurned by the feet of yon vile Matsyan
The wife of those whose foes, in time gone by,
Dared not to sleep—no, not if four broad realms
Lay between them and vengeance. Ye have seen
Her outraged who hath champions strong enough
To shatter all your state—if they would strike.
Well for ye is it that these warriors skulk ;
Well for ye that their force immeasurable
Sleeps like an eunuch’s spirit, witnessing
Their dear chaste Lady beaten as a drab !
Thou too, O King ! no King thou shewest thyself,
Else had’st thou nowise suffered that this man,
Base Thief—not Army-Chief—should flout me thus
In thy full Court ! Dishonoured are ye all,
Not knowing right, nor virtue !—infamous
The throne ye serve ; and ye who serve the throne !”

Then spake the troubled King : “ We have not known
Your cause of quarrel ;” and the Courtiers said,
“ Truly the large-eyed One hath wrong herein ;
Faultless to view she is—most beautiful !”

But Yudhishthira, calm in wrath, addressed
 His beauteous wife : “ Sairindhri ! tarry not !
 Go to the Queen. The wives of heroes bear
 Distress for those they love, and so attain.
 Those Godlike Lords of thine choose not this hour
 To wreak their ire ; yet they will choose. Weep not
 Nor play the actress here ! Thy Gandharvas
 Will do thee pleasure, and requite this man.”

So went she grieved, her long hair loose, her eyes
 Reddened with weeping, to Sudeshnâ’s bower,
 And told the deeds of Kichaka. But when
 The Queen had said, “ If he has done this thing
 He should be shent,” the sobbing Princess cried,
 “ Nay ! those he wronged shall slay him ! two days hence
 I think his soul will sink to Yamalôk.”

And when she reached her room and stripped to bathe
 Her fairest body, fell she to hot thought,
 Musing : “ What shall I do ? Where go ? What plan
 To kill this Lord ? ” and as she mused, the name
 Of Bhima came : “ Bhima will aid—none else
 Save Bhima can achieve ! ” So she arose
 And sought out Bhima in his cooking-place,

Approaching as a three-year cow her bull
 In season, or a hen-crane towards its mate
 At pairing time ; and like a jungle-vine
 Clasping a Śal on Gomti's wooded banks ;
 Or like a fondling lioness that wakes
 Her maned lord in the woods, so Draupadi
 Cast her long arms round Bhima, and so roused :
 And him addressing, with a voice as sweet
 As the mid-notes of vina, cried : " Arise !
 Sleepest thou now ? or art thou dead, indeed,
 Suffering that man to live who shamed thy wife ? "

Then Bhima, sitting up upon his bed,
 Enquired, " What would'st thou ? " And in whispered
 wrath

The Princess of Panchâla told anew
 Her tale of shame ; and broke to bitter words,
 Lamenting sore that Yudhisthir should live
 The King's hired dicer, careless of her fame ;
 And great Arjuna lay his bow aside
 To wear armlets and ear-rings, and to sit
 The women's singing-master ; Sahadev
 A cowherd in the pens, all weaponless ;
 And Nakula training horses in the stalls.

"Thou, Bhima's self, defamed to Vallava
 To cook, cut wood, and fight wild beasts for sport!
 Nay, I, the Queen!" so she went on, "beguiled
 By Yudhisthira's fault to go in garb
 Of waiting-woman, live at orders, bear
 All I have borne, unrighted. See! these hands
 Blistered with pounding sandal—hands of one
 Who never once before in all her life
 Touched pestle, save for Kûnti, now I stand
 Daily before the door a patient slave
 Trembling to learn if I have pounded well!
 What have I wrought to vex the Gods so much?
 It is not meet for me longer to live!"

Then Bhima, weeping, lifted to his face
 Those tender hands of Draupadi, thus scored
 With daily toil, and sorrowful replied:

"It shames our name, it mocks our strength, to see
 These dear worn hands! I would have flooded all
 With blood, but Yudhisthira's glance forbade.
 That we dwell here dissembling—that these men
 Still breathe—sticks like a spear-blade in my heart.
 Yet grieve not thus! If Yudhisthira heard,

Or Arjun, or the Twins, they would not live,
 And I should weary then of living! Wait!
 Bear our fates patiently! a little more—
 Half of one moon—and thou art Queen again!”

But Draupadi made answer: “Nay, one day
 Is all too long! I cannot wait! Rise now!
 Act, or I die! The Queen, jealous of me,
 Aids Kichaka; and he—when I say ‘Fool!
 I am the wife of five great Gandharvas,
 Their wrath will crush thee!’—Kichaka replies,
 ‘Small fear have I of thy five Gandharvas,
 Sweetest Sairindhri! I can match in fight
 A lakh of such! Therefore, too fearful, yield!’
 At that the proud Lord laughs—lustful and rich,
 Reckless and villainous—and if we wait,
 This man will seize some chance, and master me;
 Then must I die; then prudence will seem vile;
 Then all is lost; with loss of name and fame.
 O Bhima! with thine own eyes thou did’st see
 Th’ adulterer spurn me. Kill him, dear strong Lord!
 Break him to fragments! shatter him to shards
 As when a rock crushes a chatty! Kill!
 If he sees one more sunrise I will mix

Poison with what I drink, and end : for Death
Were better than the arms of Kichaka !”

She flung on Bhima’s neck, shedding hot tears ;
And Bhima, all to comfort her, spake fair,
Wiping the drops away. Then, silent mused,
Thinking of Kichaka ; and while he thought
He licked the corners of his mouth, made dry
By fire of rage. At last he rose and said :

“ See ! I will do this thing thou askest ! Go,
Put by all signs of sorrow : find that man !
The Dancing-chamber which the King hath built
By day is used for Nautchnees, but at night
Is empty, and a well-carved bed stands there.
That is the place where I will send his soul
Where those have gone who did beget this dog.
Appoint he meet thee there to-night ; but so
That others shall not hear nor spy.”

Full soon
Kichaka speaks with her—he wandered wide
To seek her—saying this : “ I struck thee, girl !
Yesterday in full Court before the throne.

Now knowest thou well there is no Lord save I
 Who am the Captain of the troops, and Chief
 In grey Virâta's City. Take me, then!
 Have thou for slave the master of this state
 And I will give thee, Fairest! servants, cars,
 Mules, and a hundred nishkas of red gold.
 Shall this thing be?"

Draupadi answered: "Yes,
 This thing shall be, sith thou must have it so;
 But only if none know—none of thy friends:
 I am in terror of my Gandharvas.
 Promise it shall be secret, and I yield!"

"Oh, thou of loveliest limbs!" quoth Kichaka,
 "Gladly I promise—I am thrall to thee!
 To what good meeting-place should I repair,
 Where those—thy dreadful Five—shall nought discern?"

Draupadi said: "There is the Dancing Hall
 Built by the King, where Nautchnees play by day;
 But leave it free at nights. Thither repair
 When the dark falls; my husbands do not know
 That spot: we shall be quit of censure there."

But when, apart, she mused those uttered words,
 That she should speak them, and the hearer live—
 The afternoon seemed like a long slow moon,
 So grievous 'twas to await! And, unto him
 The watches of that day seemed without end,
 So was he glad and keen, not knowing Death
 Had come to call him in Sairindhri dress.
 Reft of his wits, he plumed himself for love,
 Embellishing, anointing, tricking out
 With garlands, perfumes, ornaments—at heart
 Aye musing on her great dark eyes, her limbs
 Smooth as banana-stems, her shining hair,
 And stately step. Like a spent lamp which flares
 Before the flame dies down, so Kichaka
 Bore himself brighter, as his proud heart drew
 Nearer the stroke of Fate.

But Draupadi,
 Beautiful with her wrath, sought Bhima out
 And whispered: "What thou badest I have done:
 Kichaka meets me in the dancing-hall
 To-night, when darkness falls. He comes alone.
 Slay him there, Bhima! Slay him, dear my Lord,
 That hast the mighty arms! Kill this vain fool,

Drunk with vile pride. Deal with him, Kunti's son,
As doth an elephant with vilva-fruits,
So shalt thou stay these tears, and purge my shame!"

Bhima replied: "Thou hast done well! I craved
Nought better than such tidings. Now my soul
Is glad again, as when in days bygone
I slew Hidimba. Listen! Here, I swear
By thine own truth, and by my Brother's lives,
And by great Dharma, I will kill this wretch
As Indra slaughtered Vritra. Sit at peace!
This night his head shall be as vilva-fruit
Whereon an elephant hath trampled!"

So

At nightfall, early, having wrapped himself
In woman's garb, went Bhima to the Hall,
And lay in darkness on the couch, as lies
A tiger in the tiger-grass, close-hid,
Glaring, expectant till the buck shall pass.

Then Kichaka—all trim and scented—trips

To the appointed spot, full of his bliss
 To meet that peerless Queen. He enters in—
 Gropes in the gloom—this Lord of sinful soul—
 Feeling his way toward Bhima on the bed :
 Toward Bhima, burning fierce with shame and rage—
 Toward Bhima, huge and dreadful—as a moth
 Flutters into a flame, as foolish deer
 Play towards the cheetah's lair. The bed he finds ;
 Sees in the dark a form, and, smilingly
 He lisps : “ My Fair ! thou with the eyes ! art here ?
 Know, I have set apart rich gifts for thee ;
 Jewels and gold, and inner chambers stored
 With scarlet cloths and carpets ; and a throng
 Of slaves to serve our sports and pleasures ! Now
 Come I—thy humble slave ! though women say
 None is like Kichaka for face and grace ! ”

Then Bhima from the couch his answering voice
 Belittled, while he said : “ Fortunate Lord,
 To be so great and have such praise ! In truth
 A winning way is thine, and conquering hands—
 Come nearer, that I kiss them ! Ah, no doubt,
 None can resist so sweet a Lord ! ”

And while

Kichaka marvelled at those accents rough,
Suddenly started Bhima from the couch
Thunderously crying, "Now thou diest, Dog!
Now shall thy carcase roll in dust, and leave
Peace to Sairindhri and to us! Therewith
Caught he the hair of Kichaka, entwined
With flower-wreaths, bent him down, and seized his neck;
But quick, that Lord, tearing his locks away,
Grappled the Pandu Prince. So, fierce they close
In deadly strife, as when two lions meet,
Or wild bull elephants. Their huge arms rose
Like hooded cobras striking; nails and teeth
Helped hands and feet in the hot conflict. Now
One would roll uppermost, another now:
For Bhima flung down Kichaka, but he
Slipped from beneath, and hurled his enemy
Back overhand—with crash of joint and bone
As when the bamboos crack in hurricanes:
But Bhima gripped again, and beat the knees
From under Kichaka, so that both fell
Locked chest to chest, roaring in wrath, the foam
Upon their lips, fire flashing from their eyes,

Raging to slay each other in that gloom.
 Loud was the noise and clatter of the fight ;
 Till, knitting close his giant arms, the Prince
 Drew tight against his breast Kichaka's breast,
 Pressing the life-breath out ; and—waxing strong,
 As the Adulterer waned—shifted one hand
 To Kichaka's strained throat, one to his hair,
 The while with feet and knees he trampled him ;
 Whereat, o'ercome and helpless, Kichaka
 Groaned and fell prone—at which the Pandu stamped
 His body limp, and broke his limbs, and cast
 The shapeless carcase back, a lump of Death.

Thereon Bhima arose, all shaking still
 With stress of combat, red with blood, and hoarse
 By cries of rage. “Come hither ! come,” said he,
 “Thou Princess of Panchâla ! Witness here
 What thing it is who wrought to do thee shame.”

Then Draupadi, lighting a torch, strode in
 And saw the foot of Bhima planted hard
 On Kichaka's torn corpse ; and how he lay
 Bloody and broken by the carven bed ;

Whereon she called the keepers of the Hall,
Saying: "Enter! enter! see how Kichaka,
Who spurned me, and who sought to shame me, lies
Slain by my Gandharvas!"

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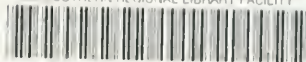
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